

# Le trône et le « char » processional de Dagan : de la philologie à l'histoire de l'art

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**Abstract.** *A mass of administrative documents coming from the grand palace of Mari enables us to describe the stages of manufacturing of luxurious seats intended for the gods. Fifteen texts are presented here in full. The most important and the most impressive throne was the one offered to Dagan. It is possible to partially reconstruct the aspect of such a complex piece of furniture and to list the sculptures and images which decorated it. A rich religious scene reveals itself to us, with the statue of the seated god, the king in prayer and numerous supernatural creatures, some well known, others less. A similar iconographic program was reproduced on a palanquin dedicated to Dagan. The article suggests that this vehicle may have been comparable to the processional floats (pasos) which parade in Spain during the Santa Semana.*

\* La présente étude, à l'origine une annexe à mon article en préparation sur « Les Statues divines et royales à Mari d'après les textes » (à paraître dans les Actes du colloque du Collège de France organisé par Th. Römer, les 5 et 6 mai 2015 : *Représenter dieux et hommes dans le Proche-Orient ancien et dans la Bible*), s'étant enrichie de l'édition ou réédition de plusieurs textes, il est apparu opportun de la transformer en article. J'ai traité partiellement du sujet dans ma conférence à l'École Pratique des Hautes Études en 2014-2015. J.-M. Durand m'a encouragé à publier ici-même les principales sources sur lesquelles se fonde ce travail, dans un souci de clarté. Il m'a généreusement transmis pour ce faire ses transcriptions et les photos disponibles, réalisées par notre équipe de Mari, et notamment, pour celles prises en Syrie, par Dibbo el-Dibbo. Je n'ai pu collationner directement sur tablette qu'une petite partie des textes (j'ai joint une copie de la tablette M.10463 [ARM XXV 285] (cf. annexe), réalisée à Paris d'après l'original, et désormais publiée par I. Arkhipov, ARM XXXII, p. 406). Le hasard a fait que I. Arkhipov était en train de préparer une étude sur le trône de Dagan en même temps que moi. Nos approches sont différentes, et mon attention se concentre ici sur le programme iconographique de cette œuvre en la comparant à d'autres du même style. Je le remercie vivement pour ses remarques.

L'année 12 de Zimrī-Lim célèbre l'installation d'un grand trône pour Dagan de Terqa : *šanat Zimrī-Lim kussēm rabēm ana Dagan ša Terqa ušēlū* « Année où Zimrī-Lim a voué un grand trône à Dagan de Terqa ». Comme dans le cas d'une majestueuse statue du roi destinée au temple d'Addu d'Alep au début du règne, cette formule a anticipé la livraison de l'ouvrage de plusieurs mois, voire même d'un an<sup>1</sup>. En effet, le projet remonte à la fin de l'an ZL 11, puisque le roi avait donné l'ordre de désigner l'an 12, même si le meuble n'avait pas encore été livré, comme : « Année où Zimrī-Lim a voué un grand trône à Dagan »<sup>2</sup>.

À la fin de l'année 11 (au mois VIII), un groupe de documents atteste qu'un trône très luxueux a été réalisé<sup>3</sup>. Il était entièrement recouvert de métal, notamment d'argent<sup>4</sup>. Ce trône était de type *nēmedum* (c'est-à-dire sans doute « à dossier »<sup>5</sup>) et comportait des *arratū*<sup>6</sup> plaqués argent<sup>7</sup>, terme qui devrait désigner les accou-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. Villard, « La place des années de « Kahat » et « Addu d'Alep », *MARI* 7, 1993, p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> LAPO 16 90 [ARM XIII 47] ; D. Charpin et N. Ziegler, « Les rois paléobabyloniens, maîtres du temps ? », in P.-S. Filliozat et M. Zink eds., *Tempus et Tempestas* (Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres), 2016, p. 19-37 et en particulier p. 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> Il s'agit d'un siège de type *nēmedum* (<sup>giš</sup>gu-za *ne-me-di*) d'après n°4 : [M.12168 = ARM XXV 262] : 7 et n°6 : [M.11201 = ARM XXV 257] : 5 (<sup>ša</sup> <sup>giš</sup>gu-za *n[e-me-di]*). Le dossier se compose de (peut-être) n°2 : [M.12412 = ARM XXV 585] du 3/viii ; n°3 : [M.11764 = ARM XXV 290] du 22/viii ; n°4 : [M.12168 = ARM XXV 262] du 23/viii ; n°5 : [M.12795 = ARM XXV 269] du 28/viii ; n°6 : [M.11201 = ARM XXV 257] du même jour que le précédent.

<sup>4</sup> n°4 : [M.12168 = ARM XXV 262]. Le texte n°3 : [M.11764 = ARM XXV 290] indique que 2 ½ mines et quelques sicles d'argent ou d'or représentent la quantité utilisée pour faire le placage de la façade <du siège> (litt. « poitrine » *ša* <sup>giš</sup>irtim), des éléments à l'avant et l'arrière (*ša panim u warkatim*) et des accoudoirs (*u ihzi ša* <sup>giš</sup>arattē).

<sup>5</sup> ARM VII 123, qui décrit un siège apparemment non encore monté, montre que le *nēmedum* est une partie de ce meuble : 1 <sup>giš</sup>gu-za *ša la* [ra-ak-su ( ?)], 1 <sup>giš</sup>ne-me-d[u ...], 4 [d]lamm[a<sup>ha2</sup> ...] « un siège qui n'a pas été agencé, un dossier, 4 génies-Lamassatum. »

<sup>6</sup> Ce terme a fait l'objet d'une analyse par A. Salonen, *Die Möbel des alten Mesopotamien*, 1963, p. 83-84 ; pour Mari, cf. M. Guichard, *La vaisselle de luxe des rois de Mari*, ARM XXXI, 2004, p. 328.

<sup>7</sup> n°3 : [M.11764 = ARM XXV 290] : (...) *ih-zi ša* <sup>giš</sup>a-ra-te-e.

doirs<sup>8</sup>. Il est possible qu'ils aient été ornés de génies Lamassatum d'arrière ([*Lamassatum* ?] *ša warkatim*)<sup>9</sup>. Sa date de réalisation laisse penser que le meuble était destiné à Dagan, mais rien ne l'indique concrètement<sup>10</sup>. Si pourtant tel était le cas, cela signifierait que le roi l'avait considéré pour ainsi dire livré à la fin ZL 11. Mais ce fut aller un peu vite, car peut-être se ravisa-t-il finalement, jugeant insatisfaisant le résultat de ses artisans.

D'autres travaux sur un siège eurent lieu l'année suivante<sup>11</sup>. Leur ampleur fut sans précédent. C'est en effet seulement entre le milieu<sup>12</sup> et la fin de l'année ZL 12 qu'un groupe de textes administratifs évoquent explicitement l'élaboration d'un trône de Dagan de Terqa<sup>13</sup>. Les principaux documents permettant de voir le très riche programme iconographique qui accompagne cette réalisation sont ARM XXI 241+M11515 (ARM XXXII, p. 399-400), ARM XXI 238+XXIV 143 (ARM XXXII, p. 400-402)<sup>14</sup> ; on trouvera ci-dessous

<sup>8</sup> Il semble qu'il y en avait naturellement deux, comme le suggèrent deux documents, d'une part, M.11545 [ARM XXV 253 = ARM XXXII, p. 472] : l. 3 qui évoque le placage en argent de deux *arattû* (2 *a-ra-at-te-e*) ; d'autre part, il est question du remplacement des *arattû* du trône de Dagan par deux autres pièces (n°13 : [A.3325 = ARM XXV 626] : 6'-7').

<sup>9</sup> n°4 : [M.12168 = ARM XXV 262]. Un autre document évoque, lui aussi, à propos de la fabrication d'un siège luxueux, le placage de figurines *muzzazzum*, soit (litt.) « se tenant debout », « gardiens » « assistants », en rapport (indirect) avec le placage d'accoudoirs-*arattû* (M.11545 [ARM XXV 253 = ARM XXXII, p. 472]).

<sup>10</sup> Le cas peut être comparé à la fabrication du trône de Šamaš, qui semble avoir été réalisé autour des mois VIII et IX/ZL 3 ; cf. M.10369 [ARM XXV 297=361] = [ARM XXXII, p. 233].

<sup>11</sup> Entre le milieu et la fin de l'année ZL 13, des travaux sur le trône de Dagan sont explicitement mentionnés dans les textes comptables (ARM XXIV 135 ou n°10 : [M.9024 = ARM XXV 191]).

<sup>12</sup> M.9049 [ARM XXXII, p. 389] du 16/v-bis/ZL 13 ; M.6438 [ARM XXXII, p. 390] du ?/v-bis/ZL 12.

<sup>13</sup> ARM XXIV 135.

<sup>14</sup> Ce document évoque certains éléments du placage (*ihzû*) du trône de Dagan de Terqa (l. 50). Les parties décorées sont la « poitrine inférieure » (<sup>8is</sup>*gaba šaplum*), une planche (*lê'um*) appliquée sur la partie avant du siège (travail de Ṭāb-Sūmu) ; la « poitrine supérieure » (<sup>8is</sup>*gaba elûm*) (travail de Yašûb-Ašar) ; une « planche de devant » (<sup>8is</sup>*amartum ša mehretim*), 2 <sup>8is</sup>*putatum*, <sup>8is</sup>*abussatum* (motifs en forme de boucles ?) ; 2 (figurines) Uridu, 2 Lamassatum, une planche *amartum* pour l'arrière (du trône), 1 <sup>8is</sup>*gištûm* « un barreau » ou plus précisément « une

n°8 : [S. 143, 25] du 11/v-bis/ZL 12 ; n°9 : [M.9028 = ARM XXV 366] du 2/vi/ZL 12 ; n°10 : [M.9024 = ARM XXV 191] du mois vi tout comme peut-être n°11 [M.11675 = ARM XXV 279] et n°12 [S. 143, 27 = ARM XXV 372]. Enfin, n°13 : [A.3325 = ARM XXV 626]<sup>15</sup>, non daté, mais dont le contenu ne laisse aucun doute sur son sujet. Il s'agit du document le plus important du dossier, même s'il est incomplet. La réalisation de cette œuvre a mobilisé plusieurs acteurs, dont d'abord des ébénistes, parmi lesquels peut-être faut-il compter Qīštī-Nunu, qui fut le principal maître d'œuvre du *nūbalum* de Dagan réalisé l'année suivante<sup>16</sup>. Nous sommes mieux renseignés sur les « métallurgistes » puisque le bois devait entièrement ou presque être recouvert de métal précieux. Les principaux responsables artisanaux<sup>17</sup> furent Yašūb-Ašar, Ṭāb-Sūmu, Erišsum-mātum et Iddin-Eštar<sup>18</sup>, auxquels il faut ajouter Iddin-Hubur, Iddin-Mamma et Buzu. Tous ces chefs d'atelier sont considérés par l'administration comme étant des orfèvres<sup>19</sup> mais une partie d'entre eux, sinon tous, doivent avoir eu aussi le titre de sculpteurs (*tibira*), les spécialistes des formes par excellence<sup>20</sup>, ou tout au moins en avoir les qualifications. Les nombreux décors et figurines qui supposent un travail complexe et délicat justifient la participation active de ces maîtres-artisans.

La réunion de toutes les informations contenues dans ces documents permet de reconstituer partiellement l'aspect du siège,

barre de traverse » (travail d'Erišsum-mātum) ; des montants (<sup>§18</sup>*kablātum*) et les (figurines) Uridu des *arattū* (travail d'Iddin-Eštar).

<sup>15</sup> Texte réédité ci-dessous.

<sup>16</sup> M.10463 [ARM XXXII, p. 406] : 18.

<sup>17</sup> D'après la lettre de Mukannišum ARM XIII 5. Ils sont d'ailleurs évoqués dans ARM XXI 238\* daté du 9/[?]/ZL 12. Ce document permet du reste de préciser sur quelle partie du siège chacun est intervenu.

<sup>18</sup> ARM XXI 401 : l. 3'. Cependant ARM XXII 237 mentionne un Iddin-Eštar *lu<sub>2</sub>-bur-gul* « lapicide ». Il n'est pas exclu que ce personnage ait eu plusieurs compétences. Quoi qu'il en soit, il est l'auteur de médaillons solaires d'après M.6392 [ARM XXXII, p. 383] et de figurines Uridum comme on l'a vu.

<sup>19</sup> M.6438 (ARM XXXII, p. 390).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. mon article à venir « Les Statues divines et royales à Mari d'après les textes » (à paraître dans les Actes du colloque du Collège de France organisé par Th. Römer, les 5 et 6 mai 2015 : *Représenter dieux et hommes dans le Proche-Orient ancien et dans la Bible*).

qui était posé sur un podium (*kigallum*). L'ensemble était recouvert de métal, argent et surtout or. Rien que le trône et ses éléments adventices impliquent une dépense exceptionnelle de 20 mines d'or. Le siège était doté de quatre pieds/montants (*kablātum*), tandis qu'une planche *amartum* servait possiblement d'assise<sup>21</sup>. De plus, il était composé d'une « poitrine » (*irtum*/<sup>giš</sup>*gaba*), qui correspond *a priori* à une partie située au devant du siège<sup>22</sup>. Celle-ci était dans le cas présent divisée en deux parties, l'une haute (*irtum elûm*) et l'autre basse (*irtum šaplum*)<sup>23</sup>. Le siège comportait, ensuite, quatre plaques ou planches dites, selon les versions, soit *amartum* soit *lê'um*. Les unes étaient agencées à l'avant et l'arrière (1 <sup>giš</sup>*amartum ša mehretim/ lê'u(m) ša mehir* <sup>giš</sup>*kussîm*<sup>24</sup> et 1 <sup>giš</sup>*amartum ša warkatim*) et les autres étaient situées sur les côtés (*lê'u(m) ša imittim/ša šumēlim*<sup>25</sup>). La place des parties *irtum* par rapport aux planches *amartum/lê'um*, qui dépend de la fonction qu'on peut leur attribuer, est difficile à déterminer. Les planches formaient peut-être la « ceinture » entourant l'assise, à moins qu'elles aient été situées dans la partie basse, n'ayant donc qu'une fonction décorative et fermant le bas du siège à la manière d'une caisse ? Les montants, quant à eux, étaient tenus entre eux par des barreaux situés pratiquement au niveau des pieds comme cela est fréquemment représenté dans l'iconographie. Une singu-

<sup>21</sup> Cf. pour cette partie n°15 : [M.10394] : 1. Éventuellement n°9 [M.9028 = ARM XXV 266] peut y faire référence mais il s'agit plus sûrement d'un parallèle à ARM XXI 241 : l. 27-28 (« planche de devant »). I. Arkhipov remarque à juste titre l'absence explicite de l'assise. Celle-ci devait être réalisée dans une autre matière, tissu ou cuir (*ši'at kussîm* ; cf. J.-M. Durand, *La nomenclature des habits et des textiles*, ARM XXX, 2009, p. 170).

<sup>22</sup> Cette expression s'emploie aussi pour un char, cf. ARM XXII 233 : 6-7 [ARM XXXII, p. 179]. Elle alterne vraisemblablement avec le terme *pūtum* « front » d'après la description d'un siège démonté ; cf. n°15 : [M.10394], ci-dessous.

<sup>23</sup> ARM XXI 238\* : 1 et 8 : *ruqqum ša gaba elîm/šaplîm* « feuille de la « poitrine » supérieure/inférieure » ; peut-être selon la reconstitution proposée ci-dessous : n°13 : [A.3325 = ARM XXV 626].

<sup>24</sup> ARM XXI 238\* [ARM XXXII, p. 400-402] : 9 ; n°13 : [A.3325 = ARM XXV 626] : 1'.

<sup>25</sup> n°13 : [A.3325 = ARM XXV 626] : 2', 5'.

larité du siège est qu'il possédait des figurines *Uridū*<sup>26</sup> servant d'accoudoirs (dit Arattéens) d'après ARM XXI 238\* [ARM XXXII, p. 400-402] : l. 42. Toutefois n°13 [A.3325] nous apprend que les "arattéens" (les [figurines] Uridu ne sont pas mentionnées), devaient être remplacés par deux chevilles (*sikkatum/gag*). Cette version implique que la décision a été prise de supprimer les accoudoirs et de les remplacer par deux pièces de bois placées aux coins avant du siège et n'ayant plus qu'une fonction décorative. ARM XXI 238\* est certainement rédigé postérieurement à n°13 [A.3325], puisqu'il traite des reliquats de métal sortis de l'atelier. Il faut donc supposer que le choix de l'accoudoir avait été finalement maintenu. On ne sait si chaque accoudoir avait la forme d'une (figurine) Uridu ou bien plutôt si cette figurine représentait seulement un ornement symbolique. Le caractère clinquant du fauteuil est souligné par l'ajout de pierreries taillées, dont des agates rubannées (*pappardilûm*)<sup>27</sup>.

D'autres documents nous apprennent que des restes métalliques du trône furent réutilisés pour des figurines en bois « *ḡiṣi-ni* » et des *Kuribu*<sup>28</sup>. Deux indications permettent de constater que les *Inu* sont des êtres mixtes<sup>29</sup>. D'une part, ils ont un aspect anthropomorphe avec leur visage (*būnū*) et leur poitrine (*gaba*) qui sont mis en valeur par un placage d'or<sup>30</sup>. D'autre part, ils sont dotés d'une queue ce qui trahit une apparence partiellement animale<sup>31</sup>. Cette partie devait avoir une importance particulière pour recevoir une feuille d'or qui devait souligner un quelconque rôle

<sup>26</sup> Cf. M. Guichard, *La vaisselle de luxe des rois de Mari*, ARM XXXI, 2004, p. 326-330.

<sup>27</sup> n°10 : [M.9024 = ARM XXV 191] et n°8 : [S.143, 25] : 5.

<sup>28</sup> M.9049 [ARM XXXII, p. 389] (11 ½ su 15 še ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> su<sub>13</sub>-a [...] *a-na ih-zi ša bu-ni* à [g]aba ša 2 ḡiṣi-ni « 11 ½ sicles 15 grains d'or fin (...) pour le placage des traits et de la poitrine de 2 figurines-*Inu*) et n°11 : [M.11675 = ARM XXV 279].

<sup>29</sup> Ce terme devrait être apparenté, comme me le signale J.-M. Durand, à *inu* qui figure dans la série lexicale IZI, tablette G : mu-tin = *i-nu*, *zi-ka-rum*, *ar-da-tum*, *iṣ-šu-rum*, *ka-su-su* « mu-tin = *inu* : un homme, une femme, un oiseau, un rapace-*kasūsu* » (MSL XIII, p. 202 et CAD I/J inu C, p. 152). Ce document fait ressortir le caractère mixte de cette créature, ce qui correspond bien à l'exemple mariote.

<sup>30</sup> M.9049 [ARM XXXII, p. 389].

<sup>31</sup> n°11 : [M.11675 = ARM XXV 279].

symbolique<sup>32</sup>. Les créatures dites *Kuribum* sont aussi dotées d'une queue. Ces personnages sont connus comme étant des gardiens surnaturels, mais ils sont principalement documentés dans les textes tardifs<sup>33</sup>. Ce sont aussi des êtres hybrides. Si la destination de ces deux « gardes divins » n'est pas précisée, le contexte laisse supposer qu'ils sont voués à Dagan, et peut-être même ont-ils été ajoutés au trône *in extremis*. On peut en dire autant des deux *marmahhûm* « purificateurs » (?) de Dagan de Terqa, dont le placage est lui aussi réalisé à partir des restes du trône<sup>34</sup>. La place probable de ces motifs sur une des parties du siège n'est pas renseignée.

Dès lors, l'iconographie du siège se laisse reconstituer ainsi en grande partie grâce à n°13 : [A.3325 = ARM XXV 626], à compléter par les informations contenues dans les autres textes du dossier : le siège lui-même devait être posé sur un piédestal (*kigallum*) dont il était prévu qu'il soit plaqué or<sup>35</sup>. Les éléments figuratifs se divisent en deux groupes, les uns figurent directement sur le trône — ils constituent son décor — les autres, moins nombreux, représentent un groupe indépendant constitué de statues placées devant le siège même, position définie par l'expression « devant la “poitrine” (du trône) ». La représentation de Dagan est quant à elle sûrement l'effigie anthropomorphe du dieu assise sur le trône<sup>36</sup>. Un billet indique d'ailleurs que cette statue a obtenu un petit supplément d'or (en vue d'une soudure (?) – *šimittum*), preuve qu'il s'agit bien d'une représentation autonome<sup>37</sup>. Une figurine

<sup>32</sup> On peut penser à une queue de scorpion, mais c'est loin d'être certain. Deux sortes d'êtres mixtes sont connus de la sorte : le Girtablullû, « Homme-scorpion » (cf. F. Wiggerman, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits. The ritual texts*, CM 1, 1992, p. 180-181 et A. Green, « Mischwesen. B Archäologie. Mesopotamien », *RLA*, Band 8 ½ Lieferung, 1993, p. 250), et « l'Homme scorpion à la queue d'oiseau » (nom ancien indéterminé) ; cf. A. Green, *ibidem*, p. 255.

<sup>33</sup> CAD K *kuribum*, p. 559 ; J. Reade, *BaM* 10, p. 41 ; F. Wiggerman, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits. The ritual texts*, CM 1, 1992, p. 181. J. Reade a proposé qu'il s'agisse d'un lion-centaure.

<sup>34</sup> n°12 [S. 143, 27 = ARM XXV 372].

<sup>35</sup> C'est du moins l'impression que laisse la rubrique finale de A.3322 : 12'.

<sup>36</sup> Un autre exemple est donné par n°1 : [M.9052 = ARM XXV 290\*], réédité ci-dessous.

<sup>37</sup> M.8616 [ARM XXV 363].

incarnant le roi, accompagnée de l'image de Yakrub-El, de montagnes et d'éléments d'un paysage lui faisaient face, sans doute directement posés sur le socle et non en contrebas de celui-ci. Le roi était représenté soit en orant, soit en porteur d'offrande.

Le devant du siège, entre les deux montants avant, était divisé en deux registres : au niveau inférieur figuraient deux Uridu et deux génies Lamassatum<sup>38</sup>, séparés au milieu par une montagne qui devait symboliser Dagan, identifié à Enlil, la « grande montagne ». D'autres motifs (géométriques ou naturalistes ?) étaient figurés, comme les *abussatum*, décor qui, d'après le sens qu'on lui connaît, reproduisait des boucles, ce qui permet un rapprochement avec le motif en spirale, très en vogue dans la glyptique contemporaine. Dans le registre supérieur étaient représentés des symboles astraux comme le soleil (*aš<sub>5</sub>-me*) et, en toute hypothèse, la lune<sup>39</sup>. Sur chacun des côtés du siège, peut-être en léger relief sur des plaques en bois, figuraient des Lamassatum (?) situées dans un « paysage » (*q/kaqqarāni*)<sup>40</sup>. Au niveau des accoudoirs (*arattūm*) se trouvaient assez vraisemblablement d'autres figurines Uridu<sup>41</sup>, une position qui suggère des sortes d'Atlantes. Enfin, le caractère surnaturel de l'ensemble de ces registres avait été renforcé par la présence de trois autres génies-Lamassatum<sup>42</sup> et surtout l'ajout probable des agents divins *Inu* (sphinx ?) et *Kuribu*.

<sup>38</sup> Ce sont peut-être ces figurines dont le placage en or est indiqué dans ARM XXI 238\* : 16 : *ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi 2 <sup>d</sup>lamma ù 2 ú-ri-di-im°* « pesée de génies-Lamassatum et de 2 (figurines) Uridu. » Ou encore ARM XXI 241\* (ARM XXXII, p. 399-400) : 30-31 : 2 *ru-qí ša 2 <sup>šis</sup>ú-ri-di, 2 ru-qí ša 2 <sup>d</sup>lamma-ha<sub>2</sub>* « 2 feuilles pour deux (figurines en bois) Uridu ; 2 feuilles pour deux génies-Lamassatum. »

<sup>39</sup> Cet astre est souvent associé au soleil, comme le montrent par exemple les textes M.11559 [ARM XXV 490 ; en dernier lieu ARM XXXII, p. 203-204] : 1 *sí-nu ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar, 1 ša-am-šu ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar* ou FM VIII 38 : 22-23 (description d'une scène) : *e-le-nu-um ša-al-mi-[im], ša-am-šu ù àš-qa-ru*.

<sup>40</sup> Pour le sens d'espace vide ou de surface (ce qui n'est pas nécessairement le cas ici), cf. CAD Q *qaqqaru* 5d, p. 121.

<sup>41</sup> Deux références y font concrètement allusion : [ki-la<sub>2</sub>-b]i ih-zi ša 4 <sup>šis</sup>ka-ab-la-tim, [ù ih-zi ša] ú-ri-di ša a-ra-at-ti « Pesée du placage de 4 montants et du placage des (figurines) Uridu » (ARM XXI 241\* : 30-31) ; ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-zi ša 4 <sup>šis</sup>kab-la-tim ù ih-zi ša ú-ri-di (n°9 : [M.9028 = ARM XXV 366] : 12-14).

<sup>42</sup> n°9 : [M.9028 = ARM XXV 366]. Le texte ne permet pas de déterminer leur position.



Enfin, la paire de *marmahhum* (prêtres purificateurs mythiques ?) devait contribuer à renforcer le caractère sacré de la scène générale, quelle que soit sa position.

L'année suivante, en ZL 13, il est encore question d'un trône de Dagan, mais cette fois celui-ci est intégré à une structure de palanquin *nūbalum*, lequel est réalisé en bois de Magan<sup>43</sup>. S'agit-il d'une énième phase dans l'élaboration d'un siège particulièrement complexe à réaliser ?

L'une des pièces importantes du dossier est la tablette M.10463 [ARM XXXII, p. 406], datée de l'année 13<sup>44</sup>. Le texte est du même genre qu'ARM XXI 238\*. À ce document s'ajoutent d'autres, comme M.11273 [ARM XXXII, p. 406] du 8/IV/ZL 13<sup>45</sup> ; M.11277 [ARM XXXII, p. 405] du 4/IV/ZL 13<sup>46</sup> ; M.8614 [ARM XXXII, p. 405] du 7/IV/ZL 13<sup>47</sup> et n°14 : [M.10441] du même mois. Hormis les particularités du *nūbalum*, la description des parties iconographiques du meuble est très similaire à celle du trône de ZL 12 (n°13 : [A.3325 = ARM XXV 626] et ses parallèles que nous venons d'analyser). Mais la comparaison fait aussi ressortir de nettes différences, ce qui rend improbable l'identification des deux meubles l'un avec l'autre. Dans ce cas, nous aurions l'opportunité de comparer deux « programmes iconographiques » similaires, ouvrant la possibilité de découvrir certaines normes de l'art (religieux) de la période paléo-babylonienne de Mari.

M.10463 [ARM XXXII, p. 406], comme on l'a dit, ne constitue qu'un bilan des « déchets » consécutifs aux travaux et n'offre donc pas une véritable description de l'ensemble. Mais, grâce à ce que l'on a appris avec le trône de Dagan de Terqa, on doit supposer qu'une « mise en scène » tout à fait comparable a été mise en place sur le palanquin. Il est probable que le roi était représenté

<sup>43</sup> M.11277 [ARM XXXII, p. 405].

<sup>44</sup> Cf. la copie ci-dessous.

<sup>45</sup> Placage des 4 *kantuhhum* du *nūbalum*. Il s'agit sans doute d'un ajout d'argent car la somme indiquée correspond pratiquement à celle du déchet généré par le travail de placage (M.10463 [ARM XXXII, p. 406] : 10-11).

<sup>46</sup> Il y est fait mention des deux Lamassatum d'arrière réalisées par l'ébéniste Iddin-Mama.

<sup>47</sup> De l'or est confié à Iddin-Eštar pour faire une soudure (?) (*šimittum*) sur la statue de Dagan.

de la même façon sous la forme d'une figurine faisant face à Dagan. Il était accompagné d'un génie-*šēdum*. Celui-ci remplace visiblement Yakrub-El. Il n'est pas exclu que ce ne soit qu'une autre manière de désigner cette divinité secondaire de Terqa. La relation entre les deux représentations confirme ce que suggère déjà bien le trône de ZL 12, à savoir que Yakrub-El était considéré comme le protecteur de la personne royale, voire de la royauté mariote. Il tenait le rôle d'intercesseur auprès de Dagan, le dieu-roi du Moyen-Euphrate. En outre, deux Lamassatum désignées comme étant « d'arrière » (*ša warkatim*), un motif qui se retrouve notamment dans le siège fabriqué en ZL 11, participaient à la scène, soit derrière le roi et son gardien-*šēdum*, soit à l'arrière du trône de Dagan<sup>48</sup>. Un groupe de déesses, thème absent du trône de ZL 12, évoquait enfin la cour céleste<sup>49</sup>.

À la différence du trône de Dagan de Terqa, cette version était donc installée sur un palanquin *nūbalum*, ce qui signifie qu'elle était destinée naturellement à être transportée. On peut donc imaginer que ce véhicule était une sorte de char processionnel pouvant être porté par des hommes d'une façon qui devrait rappeler peu ou prou les magnifiques chars recouverts d'argent, supportant des figurines mimant les scènes de la Passion et qui défilaient chaque année dans les rues étroites et bondées de Séville lors de la Semaine sainte. La scène du char processionnel mariote exhibait, quant à elle, une scène classique de la dévotion royale, dont le caractère merveilleux tenait autant à cette singulière débauche d'or et de brillance qu'à la présence de gardiens imaginaires.

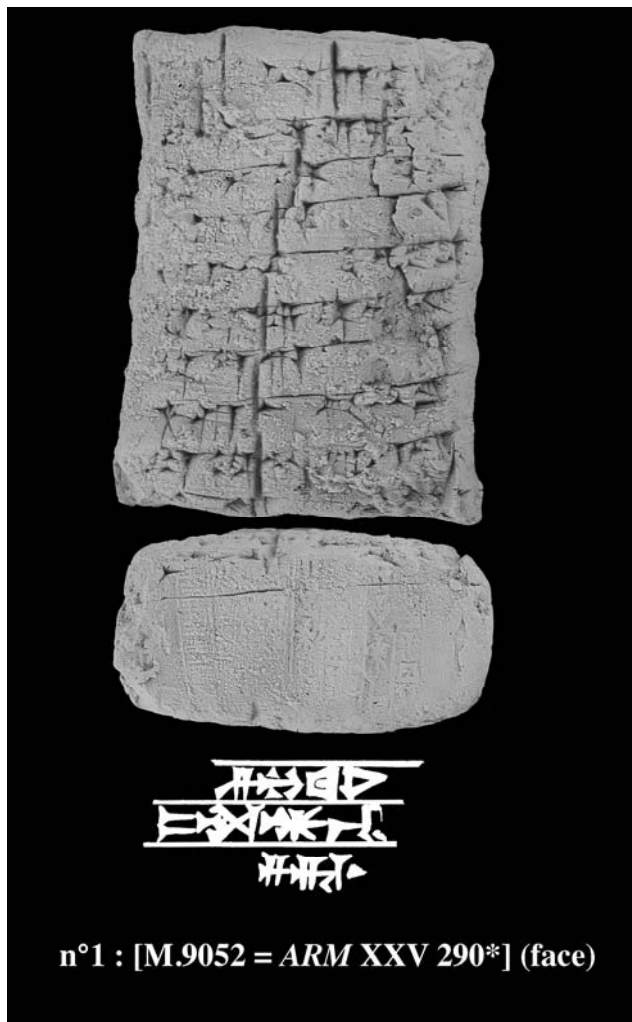
Les textes :

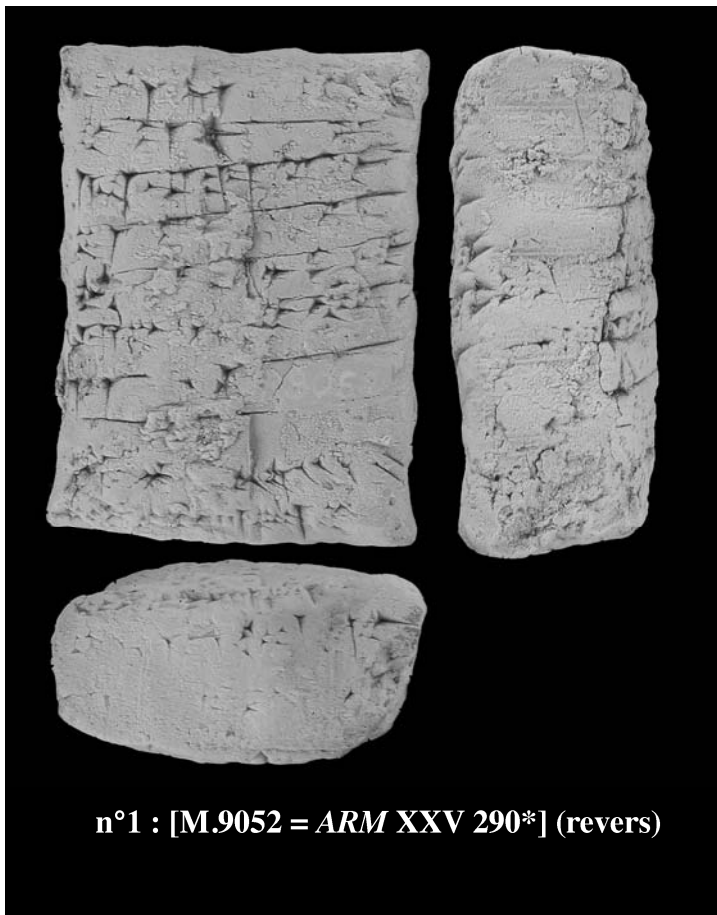
<sup>48</sup> Elles sont l'objet d'un traitement particulier comme le montre M.11277 [ARM XXV 676].

<sup>49</sup> La suggestion d'I. Arkhipov de comprendre *alam-ha<sub>2</sub> ilātīm* est excellente, mais le signe *alam* a entièrement disparu, cf. ARM XXXII, p. 406.

## Le trône de Dagan de Mari

27/VI/ZL 7





**n°1 : [M.9052 = ARM XXV 290\*] (revers)**

***n°1 : [M.9052 = ARM XXV 290\*]***

- [... m]a-na 3 su [ ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> (?) ]  
 2 i-na na<sub>4</sub>-ha<sub>2</sub> niĝ<sub>2</sub>-š[u<sup>??</sup> lugal (?) a-sa]-kum  
 ša <sup>d</sup>da-<sup>l</sup>gan<sup>l</sup>  
 4 [š]a ma-ri<sup>ki</sup>  
 ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-zi ša alam diĝir  
 6 ša <sup>ĝi</sup>šgu-za ša <sup>d</sup>da-gan  
 ša ma-ri<sup>ki</sup>  
 8 ši-ip-rum ga-am-ru-[um<sup>?</sup>]

- ša it-ti ia-šu-ub-a-š[ar]  
 10 <sup>lu<sub>2</sub></sup>ku<sub>3</sub>-dim<sub>2</sub>  
 T. (Anépigraphie.)  
 R. i-na e<sub>2</sub> uzu  
 12 im-ma-ah-ru  
 a-na ra-ka-si-im  
 14 tu-ú-ur  
 ġiri<sub>3</sub> [m]u-<sup>l</sup>ka<sup>l</sup>-an-ni-ši-im  
 16 eb-bu-ut <sup>l</sup>d<sup>l</sup>iškur-mu-ba-lí-iṭ  
<sup>l</sup>u<sup>l</sup> u-bar-rum  
 (Ligne blanche.)  
 18 iti <sup>d</sup>l[GI].KUR u<sub>4</sub> 27-kam  
 mu zi-im-ri-li-im  
 T. 20 bad<sub>3</sub><sup>ki</sup> ia-ah-du-li-im/i-pu-š[u]

Sceau de Sîn-muballiṭ, fils de Warad-Sîn, serviteur  
de Zimrî-Lim :

[<sup>d</sup>i]škur-mu-ba-lí-[iṭ]  
 dumu ir<sub>3</sub>-<sup>d</sup>EN.[ZU<sup>7</sup>]  
 [ir<sub>3</sub> zi-i]m-ri-[li-im]

<sup>1</sup>x mine(s) 3 sicles [d'or], <sup>2</sup>selon les poids du service [du roi],  
propriété sacrée <sup>3-4</sup>de Dagan de Mari, <sup>5</sup>pesée du placage de  
la statue du dieu <sup>6</sup>du trône de Dagan de Mari. <sup>8</sup>Travail ache-  
vé <sup>9-12</sup>qui a été reçu d'auprès de Yašūb-Ašar l'orfèvre, dans  
le Bīt-širim. <sup>13-14</sup>C'est retourné (à l'atelier) pour  
l'assemblage.

<sup>15</sup>Responsable : Mukannišum.

<sup>16-17</sup>Contrôle d'Addu-muballiṭ et Ubarrum. (Date).

**1. 2 :** je dois l'idée de cette restitution à une excellente sugges-  
tion de G. Chambon, qui me rappelle en outre le parallèle offert  
par ARM XXII 196 [= ARM XXXII, p. 227].

## Le trône de l'année 11

3/VIII/ZL 11

**n°2 : [M.12412 = ARM XXV 585]**

(Moitié supérieure manquante.)  
 [o ]x [...]  
 2' [ki]-la<sub>2</sub>-bi [ih-zi]  
 [š]a 4 ra-<sup>1</sup>ab<sup>2</sup>/ša<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>-x[...]  
 4' ù 2 su igi-4-ĝa[l<sub>2</sub> ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar]  
 ší-mi-it-tum  
 6' šu-nigin 2 1/2 ma-na 6 1/2 su {ŠE} ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar  
 i-na na[<sub>4</sub>-h]a<sub>2</sub> [niĝ<sub>2</sub>-š]u lugal  
 8' ĝ[iri<sup>?</sup>...]  
 (Moitié inférieure manquante.)

R. (Espace blanc.)  
 iti <sup>d</sup>da-gan  
 2" u<sub>4</sub> 3-kam  
 mu zi-im-ri-li-im  
 4" ti-lu-ut ka<sub>2</sub>-diĝir-ra<sup>ki</sup> il-li-ku

[...] <sup>2'</sup> pesée du [placage] <sup>3'</sup> de 4... <sup>4'</sup> et 2 sicles <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> [d'argent] (représentant) <sup>5'</sup> une soudure. <sup>6'</sup> Total : 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> mines 6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> sicles d'argent <sup>7'</sup> selon les poids du service du roi.  
<sup>8'</sup> Res[ponsable (?) : NP...]. (Date)

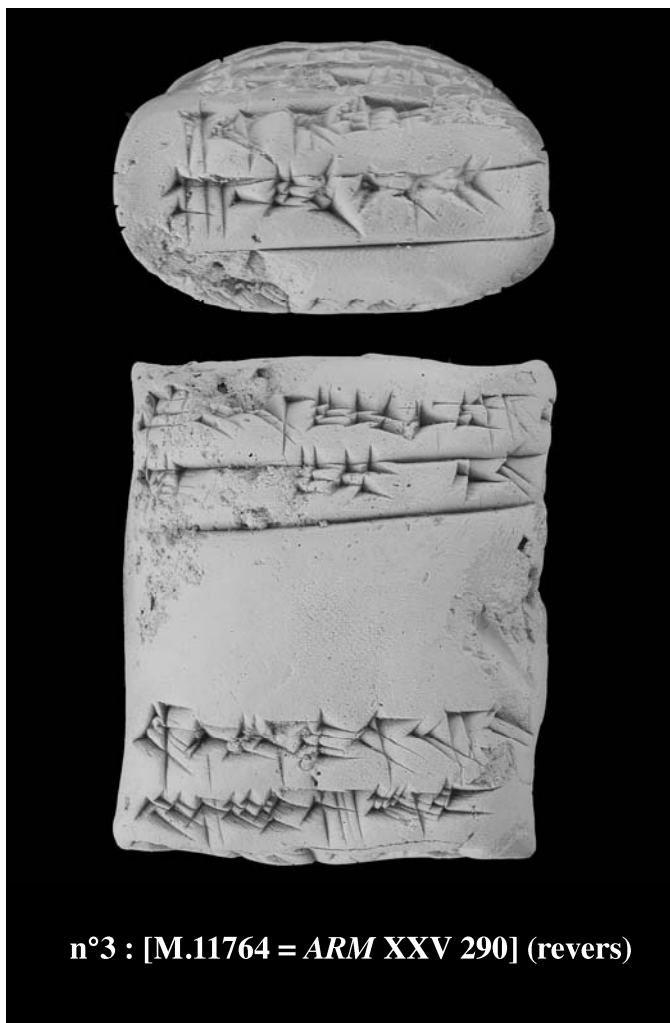
**Note :** l'attribution de ce document au dossier du trône est incertaine.



n°2 : [M.12412 = *ARM XXV* 585] (face)



n°3 : [M.11764 = *ARM XXV* 290] (face)



n°3 : [M.11764 = *ARM XXV* 290] (revers)



## 22/VIII/ZL 11

### n° 3 : [M.11764 = ARM XXV 290]

2 1/2 ma-na 2+[1 1/2 (?) su ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar]  
2 i-na na<sub>4</sub>-ha<sub>2</sub> [niĝ<sub>2</sub>-šu lugal]  
ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-[zi]  
4 ša <sup>ĝiš</sup>i-ir-<sup>l</sup>tim<sup>l</sup>  
ša pa-ni-im ù wa-ar-ka-tim  
6 ù ih-zi ša <sup>ĝiš</sup>a-ra-te<sub>9</sub>-e  
a-na ha-la-š<sup>i</sup>-im  
T. 8 si-la<sub>2</sub> i-din-<sup>d</sup>IGI.KUR  
R. eb-bu-ut i-bi-<sup>d</sup>ša-ha-an  
10 ù i-bi-<sup>d</sup>utu  
(Espace blanc.)  
12 iti <sup>d</sup>da-gan u<sub>4</sub> 22-kam  
mu zi-im-ri-li-im  
T. 14 til-lu-ut ka<sub>2</sub>-diĝir-ra<sup>ki</sup>  
il-li ku

<sup>1</sup> 2 1/2 mines et 3 1/2 (?) sicles [d'argent] <sup>2</sup> selon les poids du service du roi, <sup>3</sup> poids du placage <sup>4</sup> de la poitrine <du siège>, <sup>5</sup> des parties avant et arrière et <sup>6</sup> du placage des accoudoirs ("arattéens") <sup>7-8</sup> confiées à Iddin-Hubur pour le martelage<sup>9</sup>. <sup>10-11</sup> Contrôle d'Ibbi-Šahan et Ibbi-Šamaš. (Date).

**l. 5 :** l'expression ša wa-ar-ka-tim figure dans ARM XXI 238+ : l. 22-23 où, d'après le contexte, elle pourrait désigner des représentations, puisqu'elle est complétée par ù ša-di-i-im « et la montagne ».





n°4 : [M.12168 = *ARM XXV* 262] (revers)

## 23/viii/ZL 11

## n° 4 : [M.12168 = ARM XXV 262]

- i-na* 2 1/2 *ma-na* 3 1/2 *su ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar*  
 2 *i-na na<sub>4</sub>-ha<sub>2</sub> niĝ<sub>2</sub>-šu lugal*  
*ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-z[i]*  
 4 *ša i-ir-tim ša p[a<sup>750</sup>-ni-im ù]*  
*wa-ar-ka-tim ù [ša 2 <sup>d</sup>lamma (?)]*  
 6 *ša wa-ar-ka-tim [...]*  
*ša <sup>ĝi<sub>8</sub></sup>gu-za ne-me-di*  
 8 *ši-ip-rum ga-am-ru*  
*ša it-ti i-din-<sup>d</sup>IGI.KUR*  
 10 *im-ma-ah-ru*  
*[ih-h]a-li-[i<sub>8</sub>]*  
 12 *[a-na ra-ka-si-im tu-ur]*  
*[si-la<sub>2</sub> i-din-<sup>d</sup>IGI.KUR]*  
 (...)
- R. *ù be-e[l-šu-nu]*  
 2' *iti <sup>d</sup>da-gan u<sub>4</sub> 23-kam*  
*mu zi-im-ri-li-im*  
 4' *til-lu-ut ka<sub>2</sub>-diĝir-ra<sup>ki</sup>*  
*[il]-li-k[u]*

Sceau : anépigraphe, identique à celui de n°6 et n°7.

<sup>1</sup> Sur 2 1/2 mines 3 1/2 sicles d'argent, <sup>2</sup> selon les poids du service du roi, <sup>3</sup> pesée du placage de la « poitrine », des parties d'a[vant et] <sup>5</sup> d'arrière et de [deux Lamassatum] d'arrière [...] faisant partie du siège à dossier : travail achevé qui a été reçu d'auprès d'Iddin-Hubur (et) a été *martelé*. <sup>12</sup> [C'est retourné (à l'atelier) pour l'assemblage.

<sup>50</sup> La lecture hors contexte a conduit J.-M. Durand à proposer AN. Le rapprochement avec n°3 : [M.11764 = ARM XXV 290] permet de choisir une autre option.

<sup>13</sup> Confié à Iddin-Hubur... Responsables : ...] <sup>1'</sup> et Bēl-šunu.  
(Date).

**Note :** Si on compare ce document avec le précédent (n°3), il nous apprend que l'opération *halāšum* accomplie par le métallurgiste Iddin-Hubur a pris une journée. On remarquera que les accoudoirs-*arattû* sont désignés d'une manière différente dans les deux textes. Cependant, dans la lacune de la ligne 6, le terme *arattû* apparaissait peut-être sur le modèle de l'expression *Uridū ša Arattê* « (figurines)-Uridu des accoudoirs » [ARM XXI 241<sup>+</sup> : 42].

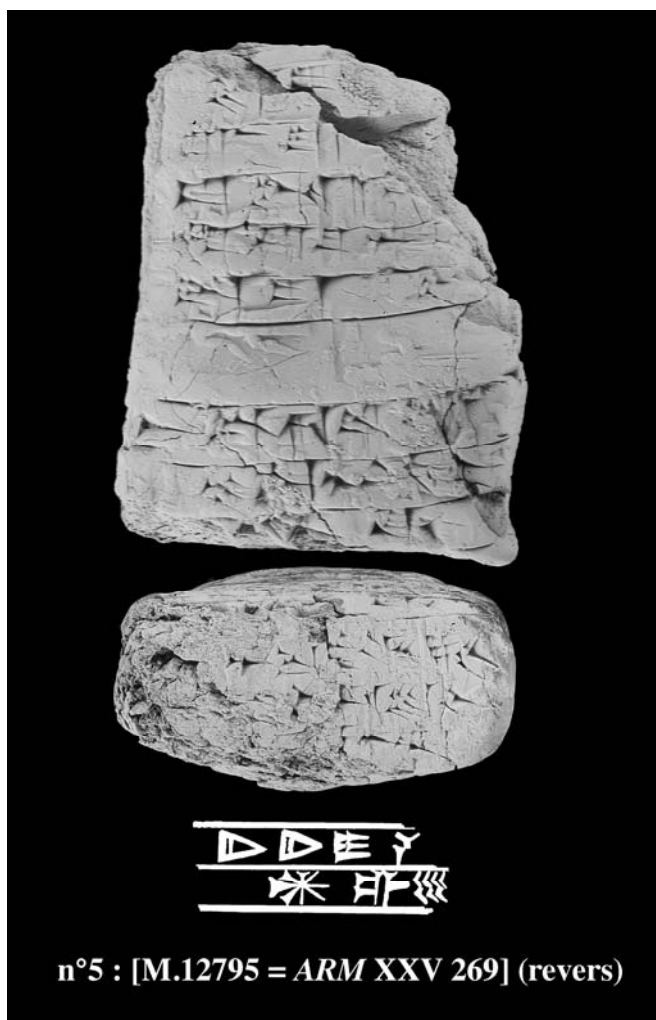
## 28/viii/ZL 11

n°5 : [M.12795 = ARM XXV 269]

[o o o m]a-na 6 1/3 su ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar  
2       「i-na」 na<sub>4</sub>-ha<sub>2</sub> niĝ<sub>2</sub>-šu lugal<sup>51</sup>  
      ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-zi  
4       ša <sup>ĝi</sup>g[u<sup>?</sup>-za ne-me-d]i<sup>?</sup>-im  
      [ù <sup>ĝi</sup>is<sup>?</sup>B[U<sup>?</sup>-...]  
6    ši-ip-[rum ga-am-rum]  
      ša [it-ti NP]  
8    i[m<sup>?</sup>-ma-ah-ru]  
      [ih-ha-li-iš-ma ik-ka-ti-im]  
T. 10 1/2 su k[u<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> im-ṭi]  
      [a-n]a ra-[ka-si-im]  
12   tu-ú- [ur]  
      si-la<sub>2</sub> ia-[šu-ub-a-šar]  
14   eb-bu-ut a-h[u-ši-na]  
      ù   ip-qú-<sup>d</sup>š[a-la]  
16   i-na e<sub>2</sub> uzu  
      [ĝi]ri<sub>3</sub> da-ri-i[š]-li-bur  
18       mu-ka-an-ni-ši-im  
      [ù   be]-el-šu-nu

<sup>51</sup> Sur signe effacé.





- 20 [iti] <sup>d</sup>da-gan u<sub>4</sub> 28-kam  
 [mu zi]-im-ri-li-im  
 22 [til-lu-ut ka<sub>2</sub>]-diġir-ra<sup>ki</sup>  
 [il-li- ku]

Sceau(x) : image (face) + texte (revers) :

ì-lí-i-d[<sup>in</sup>-nam]

[ir<sub>3</sub>] <sup>d</sup>mar-t[u]

<sup>1</sup>x mine(s) 6 1/3 sicles d'argent, <sup>2</sup>selon les poids du service du roi, <sup>3</sup>pesée du placage du trône à dossier <sup>5</sup>... <sup>6</sup>Travail achevé <sup>7-8</sup>qui a été reçu d'après de [NP]. <sup>9</sup>Il a été martelé<sup>7</sup> et "recouvert". <sup>10</sup>Un demi sicle d'or de freinte. <sup>11-12</sup>C'est retourné (à l'atelier) pour l'assemblage. <sup>13</sup>Confié à Yašūb-Ašar. <sup>14-15</sup>Contrôle d'Ahušina et Ipqu-Šala. <sup>16</sup>Dans le Bīt-širim. <sup>17-19</sup>Responsables Dāriš-libūr, Mukannišum et Bēl-šunu. (Date).

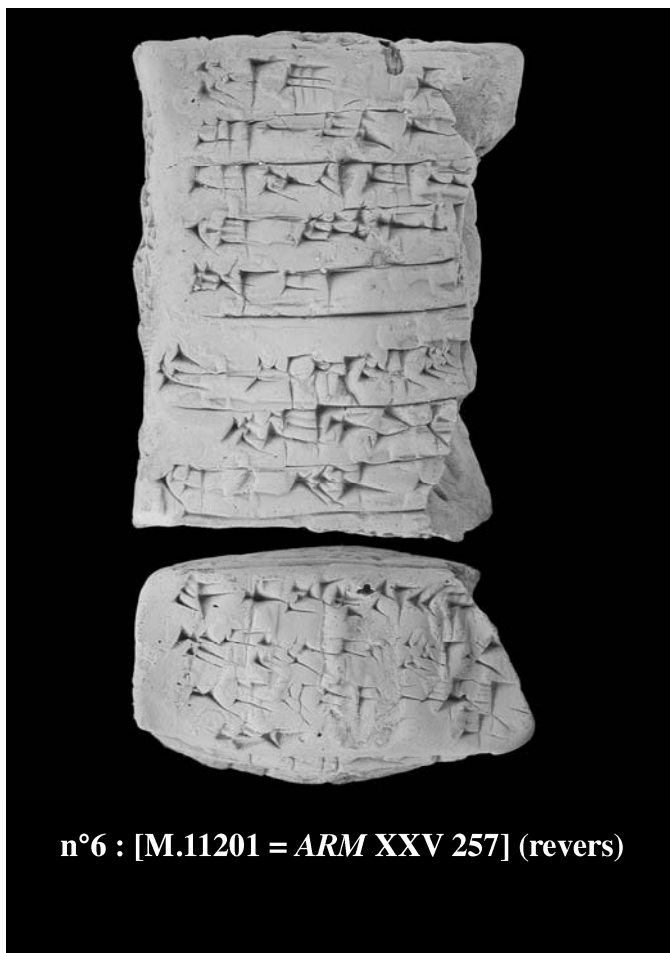
**n° 6 : [M.11201 = ARM XXV 257]**

- 1/3 ma-na 2 1/3 su ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub>  
 2 i-na na<sub>4</sub>-ha<sub>2</sub> ša e<sub>2</sub> [te-er-tim]  
 ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi i[h-zi]  
 4 ša a-bu-us-[sa-tim]  
 ša <sup>giš</sup>gu-za n[e\*-me-di]  
 6 qa-du 1/2 su ku<sub>3</sub>-[si<sub>22</sub>]  
 ší-mi-it-ti-ši-n[a]  
 8 ša it-ti i-din-<sup>d</sup>IGI.KUR  
 im-ma-ah-ru  
 10 a-na ra-ka-si-im  
 tu-ú-ur  
 12 si-la<sub>2</sub> i-din-<sup>d</sup>IG[I.KUR]  
 eb-bu-ut ib-bi-[<sup>d</sup>utu]  
 14 ù i-bi-<sup>d</sup>ša-[ha-an]  
 i-na e<sub>2</sub> u[zu]





n°6 : [M.11201 = *ARM XXV 257*] (face)



- 16    ġiri<sub>3</sub> *da-ri-iš-li-[bur]*  
   *mu-ka-an-ni-ši-[im]*  
18    ù        *be-el-šu-[nu]*  
                 *iti <sup>d</sup>da-gan u<sub>4</sub> 28-[kam]*  
20    *mu zi-im-ri-li-im*  
                 *til-lu-ut ka<sub>2</sub>-diġir-ra<sup>ki</sup>*  
22    *il-[l]i-ku*  
                 *ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> ša it-ti a-hu-ši-na*  
24                   *iš-ša-mu*

Sceau anépigraphe identique à celui de n°7 :  
[M.12230] (cf. ci-dessous).

<sup>1</sup> 1/3 mine 2 1/3 sicle d'or, <sup>2</sup> selon les poids de l'administration (?), <sup>3</sup> pesée du placage <sup>4</sup> des *abussatum* <sup>5</sup> du trône à dossier <sup>6</sup> y compris ½ sicle d'or <sup>7</sup> (représentant) leur soudure, <sup>8</sup> lequel a été reçu d'auprès d'Iddin-Hubur. <sup>10-11</sup> C'est retourné (à l'atelier) pour l'assemblage. <sup>12</sup> Confié à Iddin-Hubur. <sup>13-14</sup> Contrôle d'Ibbi-Šamaš et d'Ibbi-Šahan. <sup>15</sup> Dans le Bīt-širim. <sup>16-18</sup> Responsables : Dāriš-libūr, Mukannišum et Bēlšunu. (Date). <sup>23-24</sup> (C'est) l'or qui a été acheté auprès d'Ahu-šina.

### **n°7 : [M.12230]**

- (Début perdu.)  
[na<sub>4</sub>] ʾ1<sup>?</sup> su<sup>1</sup> n[a<sub>4</sub>...]  
2'    ʾù<sup>?</sup> na<sub>4</sub> igi 4-ġal<sub>2</sub> [su...]  
         [k]i-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-z[i]  
4'    ša 3 <sup>ġi</sup>gaba zi-m[i<sup>?</sup>...]  
         [1<sup>?</sup>]+1 <sup>ġi</sup>pu-ta-at w[a<sup>2</sup>-ka-ar-tim (?)]  
6'    [o] <sup>ġi</sup>pu-[t]a-ʾat<sup>1</sup> [...]  
         ù 1 <sup>ġi</sup>[a-bu]-sà-t[im]  
T.    (Anépigraphe.)  
R. 8'    ša <sup>ġi</sup>gu-za ne-me-di  
         [i]h-ha-li-iš-ma <ik-ka-ti-im>



n°7 : [M.12230] (face)



n°7 : [M.12230] (revers)

- 10' [o] su 15 še ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar im-ṭi  
[a-n]a ra-ka-si-im tu-ur  
12' si-la<sub>2</sub> i-din-<sup>d</sup>IGI.KUR  
eb-bu-ut i-bi-<sup>d</sup>ša-[ha-an]  
14' ù i-bi-<sup>d</sup>[utu]  
[i-n]a pa-pa-hi-im ša ki-s[a-al<sup>ḡis</sup>ḡišnimbar]  
16' [ig]i [lugal]  
(Ligne blanche.)  
[iti]r<sup>d?</sup>da<sup>?</sup>l-[gan u<sub>4</sub> x-kam]  
(Côté gauche détruit.)

Sceau anépigraphe identique à celui de n°6 :  
[M.11201 = ARM XXV 257].

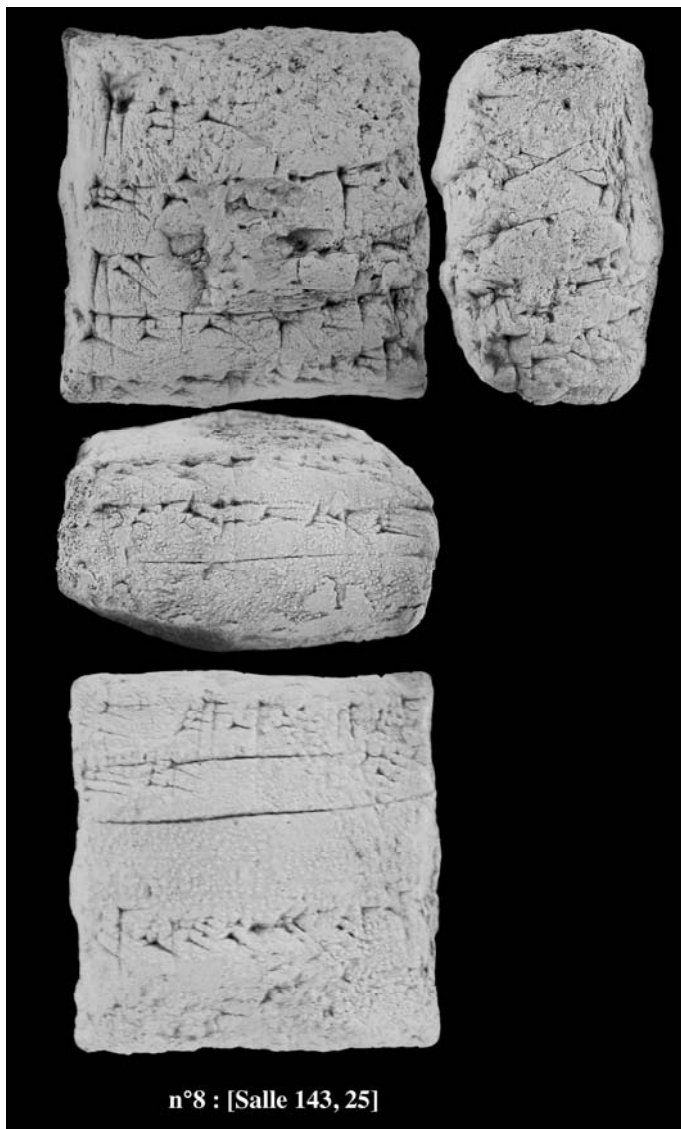
<sup>1</sup>[x mine(s) x sicle(s) d'argent, selon le poids de [...]] <sup>1'</sup>[poids d'] <sup>1</sup>sicle, poids de [...] <sup>2'</sup>et poids de ¼ sicle..., <sup>3'</sup>pesée du placage <sup>4'</sup>de 3 poitrines..., <sup>5'</sup>de deux (?) *putatum* d'a[rrrière (?)], <sup>6'</sup>de [x] *putatum* de [...] <sup>7'</sup>et d'un *abussatum* <sup>8'</sup>appartenant au trône à dossier. <sup>9'</sup>Il a été *martelé* <sup>9'</sup>et < *recouvert* >. <sup>10'</sup>[x] sicle(s) 15 grains d'argent de freinte. <sup>11'</sup>C'est retourné (à l'atelier) pour l'assemblage. <sup>12'</sup>Confié à Iddin-Hubur. <sup>13'-14'</sup>Contrôle d'Ibbi-Šahan et d'Ibbi-Šamaš. <sup>15'</sup>Dans le vestibule de la cour du palmier. <sup>16'</sup>En présence du roi. (Date).

**l. 5'-6' :** *Bu-ta-at* ou *Bu-ta-tim* (d'après les autres exemples) est transcrit provisoirement *putatum*. Le terme peut venir de *pūtum* (cf. CAD P *pūtu*, p. 549) mais peut aussi être apparenté à *Buttatum* (cf. J.-M. Durand, ARM XXX, p. 181). Le chiffre 2 est une conjecture et l'absence de toute trace du premier clou laisse la possibilité qu'il ne soit question que d'une seule pièce.

**l. 9' :** pour ces techniques encore mal identifiées, cf. K. Reiter, *Die metalle im Alten Orient*, AOAT 249, 1997, p. 429-433 et I. Arkhipov, ARM XXXII, p. 59-63. Le terme *halāšum* pourrait désigner la technique de recuit selon J.-M. Durand, suivi par K. Reiter. L'étude des objets en or de Mari a cependant conduit G. Nicolini au constat de l'absence de cette technique « faute peut-être d'une source de chaleur » (*Les ors de Mari*, 2010, p. 58). Les feuilles étaient obtenues selon lui par un martelage à froid (ce à quoi peut faire référence le terme akkadien *halāšum*). L'opération suivante *katāmum* visait peut-être à donner la forme souhaitée à la feuille avant sa fixation définitive selon la technique comparable à celle du « fourré » (G. Nicolini, *ibidem*, p. 76). Les pièces étaient contrôlées par les administrateurs et parfois par le roi directement avant d'être assemblées.

## Le dossier du trône de Dagan de l'année 12

11/v-bis/ZL 12



**n°8 : [S. 143, 25]**

- 2 ma-na [x su ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> s]u<sub>3</sub>-[a<sup>1</sup>  
 2 i-na[ na<sub>4</sub>-ha<sub>2</sub><sup>1</sup> niĝ<sub>2</sub>-šu<sup>1</sup>lugal<sup>1</sup>  
 a-na [ih-zi ša...]  
 4 1/3 ma-na 4 su ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> su<sub>3</sub>-a  
 a-na ih-zi ša ĝiš-dub<sup>na<sub>4</sub></sup>babbar-dili  
 6 ša<sup>ĝiš</sup>gu-za<sup>d</sup>da-gan  
 ša ia-šu-ub-a-šar  
 10 i-ša-mu  
 iti hi-bir<sub>5</sub>-tim niš u<sub>4</sub> 11 kam  
 12 [mu zi-im-ri-li-im<sup>1</sup>  
 T. ĝišgu-za gal a-na<sup>d</sup>[da-gan]  
 14 ša ter-qa<sup>ki</sup>  
 ú-še-lu-ú

<sup>1</sup> 2 mines [x sicle(s) d'or] fin, <sup>2</sup> selon les poids du service du roi, <sup>2</sup> pour [le placage de ...].

<sup>4</sup> 1/3 mine 4 sicles d'or fin, <sup>5</sup> pour le sertissage<sup>52</sup> de carreaux (ništuppum) en pierre-pappardilûm <sup>6</sup> faisant partie du trône de Dagan <sup>7-8</sup> que Yašûb-Ašar a acheté(s). (Date).

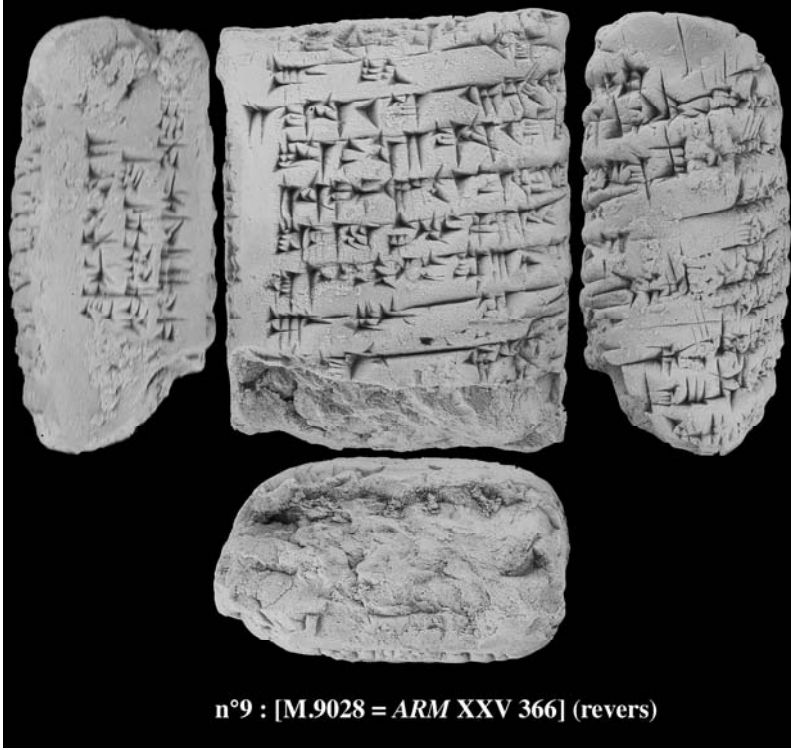
**2/VI/ZL 12****n°9 : [M.9028 = ARM XXV 366]**

- 1 1/2 ma-na 3 1/3 su 15 še ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub>  
 2 i-na na<sub>4</sub> 1 ma-na 1/2 ma-na 3 su  
 1/3 su ù 15 še ša e<sub>2</sub> te-er-tim  
 4 ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi <ša ih-zi> 1 a-ma-ar-tim  
 ù 2 pu-ta-tim a-na ha-la-šf-im  
 6 ù ka-ta-mi  
 si-la<sub>2</sub> i-din<sup>d</sup>ma-ma

<sup>52</sup> Autre sens possible du terme ihzû.







- 8    5 ma-na 10 su ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> ši-quí  
       i-<sup>l</sup>na na<sub>4</sub> 5 ma-na ù na<sub>4</sub> 10 su  
 T. 10    a-na [pa-an] ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub>  
       na<sub>4</sub> 1/2 su pa-ri-ik  
 12       ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-zi  
       ša 4 <sup>šis</sup> kab-la-tim  
 14       ù ih-zi ša ú-ri-di  
 R.       si-la<sub>2</sub> i-din-eš<sub>8</sub>-tár  
 16    2 ma-na 10 su ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> ši-quí  
       i-na na<sub>4</sub> 2 ma-na 10 su  
 18       a-na pa-an ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> 1 su ù 1/3 su  
       ša e<sub>2</sub> te-er-tim pa-ri-ik  
 20       ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-zi ša 3 <sup>d</sup>lamma<sup>l</sup>  
       si-la<sub>2</sub> bu-zu

22 「x x」 su ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub><sup>53</sup>  
[...]

T. (Surface détruite.)

C. 2" iti <sup>d</sup>da-gan u<sub>4</sub> 2-kam  
mu zi-im-ri-li-i[m]

4" <sup>giš</sup>gu-za a-na <sup>d</sup>da-gan ú-š[e-lu]

<sup>1</sup> 1 1/2 mine 3 1/3 sicle 15 grains d'or, <sup>2</sup> selon le poids de 1 mine, d'1/2 mine, de 3 sicles, <sup>3</sup> d'1/3 sicle et de 15 grains de l'administration, <sup>4</sup> pesée <du placage> d'une planche <sup>5</sup> et de 2 *putatum* pour le *martelage*<sup>7</sup> <sup>6</sup> et le "recouvrement". <sup>7</sup> Confié à Iddin-Mamma.

<sup>8</sup> 5 mines 10° sicles d'or *šiqu*, <sup>9</sup> selon le poids de 5 mines et le poids de 10 sicles, <sup>10-11</sup> un poids d'un 1/2 sicle contrebalançant l'or, <sup>12</sup> pesée du placage de 4 montants et du placage des (figurines) Uridu. <sup>15</sup> Confié à Iddin-Eštar.

<sup>16</sup> 2 mines 10 sicles d'or *šiqu*, <sup>17</sup> selon le poids de 2 mines 10 sicles, <sup>18-19</sup> (un poids d')un sicle et de 1/3 sicle de l'administration contrebalançant l'or, <sup>20</sup> pesée du placage de 3 génies-Lamassatum. <sup>21</sup> Confié à Buzu.

<sup>22</sup> x sicles d'or [...]. (Date).

**l. 21 :** pour cet artisan, cf. M.12556 [ARM XXV 395 = ARM XXXII, p. 405].

<sup>53</sup> Sur une ligne écrite partiellement effacée.

**n° 10 : [M.9024 = ARM XXV 191]**

- 5/6 ma-na 8 1/3 su ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> s[u<sub>3</sub>]  
 2 i-na na<sub>4</sub> 1 ma-na niĝ<sub>2</sub>-šu lu[gal]  
 a-na pa-an ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub>  
 4 na<sub>4</sub> 1 su ù 1/3 su  
 niĝ<sub>2</sub>-šu lugal pa-ri-ik  
 6 ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi 76 ih-zi  
 ša na<sub>4</sub> mu-úš-ša-ri  
 T. 8 ša <sup>ĝis</sup>gu-za ša <sup>d</sup>[da-gan]  
 ša ter-qa<sup>ki</sup>  
 10 ši-ip-rum ga-am-rum  
 ša it-ti ia-šu-ub-<sup>r</sup>a<sup>l</sup>-[šar]  
 12 im-ma-ah-ru  
 a-na ra-ka-ás na<sub>4</sub>-ha<sub>2</sub>  
 14 tu-ur  
 i-na e<sub>2</sub> bi-ir-mi  
 16 igi lugal  
 eb-bu-ut ka-i-il-<sup>d</sup>da-gan  
 18 ù lu<sub>2</sub>-meš tap-pí-[šu]  
 iti <sup>d</sup>[da-gan u<sub>4</sub> x-kam]  
 T. 20 mu zi-im-[ri-li-im]  
<sup>ĝis</sup>gu-za gal a-na <sup>d</sup>[da<sup>l</sup>-g[an]  
 22 ša ter-qa<sup>ki</sup> ú-še-l[u-ú]

<sup>1</sup> 5/6 mine 8 1/3 sicles d'or fin, <sup>2</sup> selon le poids d'une mine du service du roi, <sup>3-5</sup> faisant contrepoids à l'or, un poids d'1 1/3 sicle du service du roi, <sup>6</sup> pesée de 76 placages <sup>7</sup> de pierres (de forme) ronde<sup>7</sup> (*muššarum*) <sup>8-9</sup> faisant partie du trône de [Da-gan] de Terqa. <sup>10</sup> Travail achevé <sup>11</sup> qui a été reçu d'auprès de Yašūb-Ašar. <sup>13-14</sup> C'est retourné (à l'atelier) pour assembler les pierres. <sup>15</sup> Dans la "Maison" des peintures. <sup>16</sup> En présence du roi. <sup>17-18</sup> Contrôle de Ka'il-Dagan et de ses collègues. (Date).

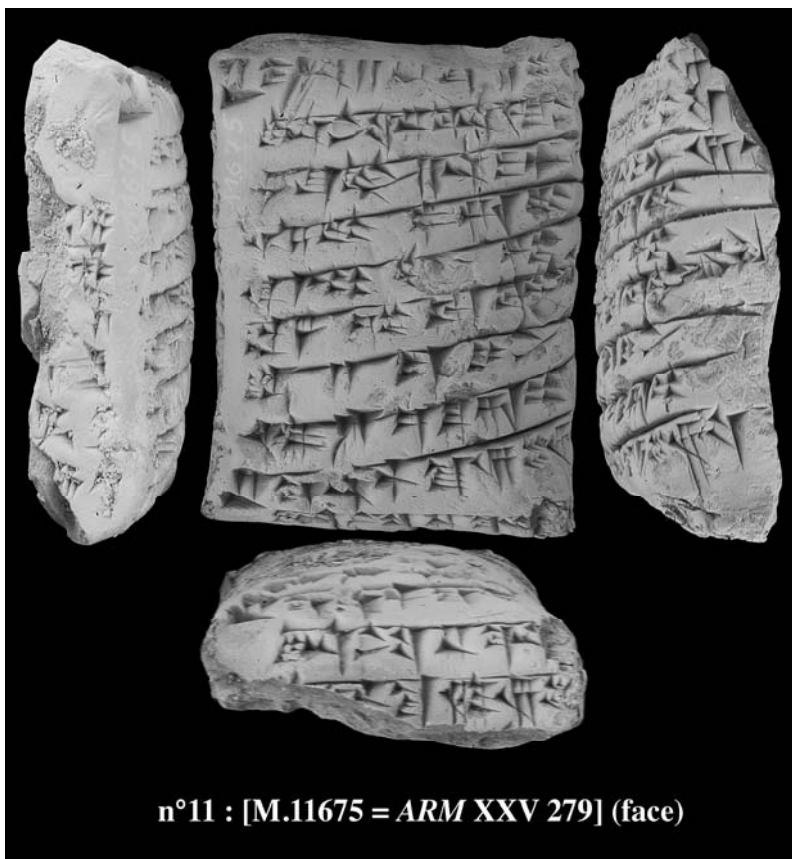


**n°11 : [M.11675 = ARM XXV 279]**

- 1/3 ma-na 2 <sup>1</sup>2/3<sup>1</sup> su<sup>1</sup>15<sup>1</sup> še ku<sub>3</sub>-[si<sub>22</sub>]  
 2 i-na na<sub>4</sub> 1/3 ma-na ù na<sub>4</sub> 1+[2 su]  
 niĝ<sub>2</sub>-šu lugal a-na pa-an ku<sub>3</sub>-s[i<sub>22</sub>]  
 4 iĝi 4-ĝal<sub>2</sub> pa-ri-ik  
 ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-zi  
 6 ša 4 zi-ib-ba-tim  
 ša 2 <sup>ĝi</sup>i-ni  
 8 ù 2 <sup>ĝi</sup>ku-ri-bi  
 1/3 ma-na 1/2 su 15 še ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar  
 10 i-na na<sub>4</sub> 1/3 ma-na  
<sup>1</sup>na<sub>4</sub><sup>1</sup> 1/2 su ù 15 še  
 R.12 [niĝ<sub>2</sub>-šu lugal]  
 [ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-zi]  
 (...)  
 [ši-ip-rum gam-rum]  
 2' [ša it-ti... im-m]a-ah-ru  
 (...)  
 C. mu zi-im-ri-li-im  
 2" <sup>1</sup>gu-za gal a-na<sup>1</sup> <sup>d</sup>da-gan  
 [ša ter-qa<sup>ki</sup> ú-še-lu-ú]

<sup>1</sup> 1/3 mine 2 2/3 sicles 15 grains d'or, <sup>2</sup> selon le poids de 1/3 de mine et de 3 sicles <sup>3</sup> du service du roi, <sup>3-4</sup> 1/4 (de sicle) contrebalançant l'or, <sup>5</sup> pesée du placage <sup>6</sup> de 4 queues <sup>7</sup> de 2 (figurines d')Inu <sup>8</sup> et 2 (figurines de) Kuribu.

<sup>9</sup> 1/3 mine 1/2 sicle 15 grains d'argent, <sup>10</sup> selon le poids de 1/3 sicle, <sup>11</sup> le poids d'1/2 sicle et 15 grains, <sup>12</sup> [du service du roi, <sup>13</sup> pesée du placage...]. <sup>1'</sup> [Travail achevé] <sup>2'</sup> qui a été reçu d'auprès de [NP]. [...]. (Date).



[vi<sup>2</sup>/ZL 12]

n°12 : [S. 143, 27 = ARM XXV 372]

(...)

2 ʽsu<sup>2</sup>ʽ [x še ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar/si<sub>22</sub>]

2' i-na na<sub>4</sub>-[ḥa<sub>2</sub> niĝ-šu lugal]  
qé-er-re-[et]

4' ḡis gu-za ša [ḏda-gan]  
ša ter-qa<sup>ki</sup>

6' a-na ih-zi  
ša 2 ḡis mar-ma-he-en

8'                      ša<sup>d</sup>da-gan  
                             ša ter-qa<sup>ki</sup>  
 10'        si-la<sub>2</sub> mu-ka-an-ni-ši-im  
               i-na ú-ur e<sub>2</sub> uz[u]  
 12'        x x [.....]  
               (...)

<sup>1'</sup> 2 sicles [... d'argent/d'or] <sup>2'</sup> au poids du service du roi,  
<sup>3'</sup> rognures <sup>4'</sup> du trône de Dagan <sup>5'</sup> de Terqa, <sup>6'</sup> pour le placage <sup>7'</sup> des  
 deux *marmahhum* <sup>8'</sup> de Dagan <sup>9'</sup> de Terqa : <sup>10'</sup> confié à Mukannišum ;  
<sup>11'</sup> sur le toit du Bīt-širim. [...]

**1. 1' :** théoriquement la lecture ʾma<sup>l</sup>-[na ...] est possible, mais une telle quantité est peu vraisemblable pour les restes des placages du trône (*qerrētum*).

**1. 7' :** le *marmahhum* serait un arbre fruitier, selon CDA, p. 198, qui, avec le CAD, rappelle qu'il est aussi connu comme variante d'*armahhum* (buissons ?). On remarque que *marmahhum* pourrait désigner aussi un purificateur, selon CAD M *marmahhūtu*, p. 284. Le terme est dérivé du sumérien mar-mah et glosé par *pašišum* dans plusieurs listes lexicales (*Vocabulaire Emesal* et *Nabnītu*). Dans le présent texte administratif, le déterminatif ḡiš ne se rapporte pas nécessairement à la nature intrinsèque de *marmahhum* mais plus sûrement à sa matière en tant que figurine destinée à être placquée. Ce constat vaut notamment pour les créatures mixtes contemporaines des deux *marmahhum*. Le duel indique que ces *marmahhum* vont toujours par deux, et l'association étroite avec Dagan nous invite à privilégier l'option des prêtres purificateurs. C'est un nouvel exemple de l'influence de « Sumer » sur le clergé de Terqa, qui avait identifié Dagan à Enlil-Nunnamnir.





n°12 : [S. 143, 27 = ARM XXV 372]

**n°13 : [A.3325 = ARM XXV 626]**

- 6 ma-na ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub>  
 2 ih-zu ša 1 alam <sup>d</sup>da-gan  
 1 alam lugal 1 alam <sup>d</sup>ia-ak-ru-bé-AN  
 4 3 alam kur-i ù qà-qa-ra-ni  
 ša ma-ha-ar i-ir-ti  
 6 2 ú-ri-di  
 2 <sup>d</sup>lamma  
 8 1 kur-i qa-ab-li-i  
 1<sup>1</sup> 1<sup>1</sup> gi<sup>2</sup>-iš<sup>2</sup> 1<sup>1</sup> [t]im ù a-bu-sà-ti  
 10 [ša ša-pa-al ( ? ) i]-ir-ti  
 [... 1 sí-ni ( ? ) ù 1] aš<sub>5</sub>-me  
 12 [...]  
 [ša e-li i-ir-ti ( ? )]  
 T. (Tranche perdue)  
 [... ša le-i-im]  
 R. ša me-hi-ir <sup>giš</sup>gu-za<sup>1</sup> ša [<sup>d</sup>a]-[ga]n  
 2' 1 ½ ma-na ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> 1<sup>1</sup> ih<sup>1</sup>-[zu] ša 1<sup>2</sup> 1<sup>1</sup> <sup>d</sup>[lam]m[a]<sup>2</sup>  
 ù qà-qa-ra-ni ša 1<sup>1</sup> le-i<sup>1</sup> ša 1<sup>1</sup> mi-ti<sup>54</sup>  
 4' 1 ½ ma-na ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> ih-zu ša 1<sup>2</sup> 1<sup>1</sup> [<sup>d</sup>]lamma ( ? )  
 ù qà-qa-ra-ni ša 1<sup>1</sup> le-i<sup>1</sup> ša šu-mé-lim  
 6' 4 ma-na ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> ih-zu ša 2 gag  
 ša pu-ha-at a-ra-te-e  
 8' i-ša-1<sup>1</sup> ak<sup>1</sup>-k[a]-nu  
 1 ma-n[a ... ku<sub>3</sub>-si<sub>22</sub> ih-zu ša... l]e<sup>2</sup>-i {Li}  
 10' [...]  
 [...]x  
 [(Espace blanc ?)]  
 12' šunigin 20 m[a-na x su ku<sub>3</sub>]-si<sub>22</sub>  
 ih-zu ša <sup>giš</sup>gu-za e-zu-ub/ki-gal-lim

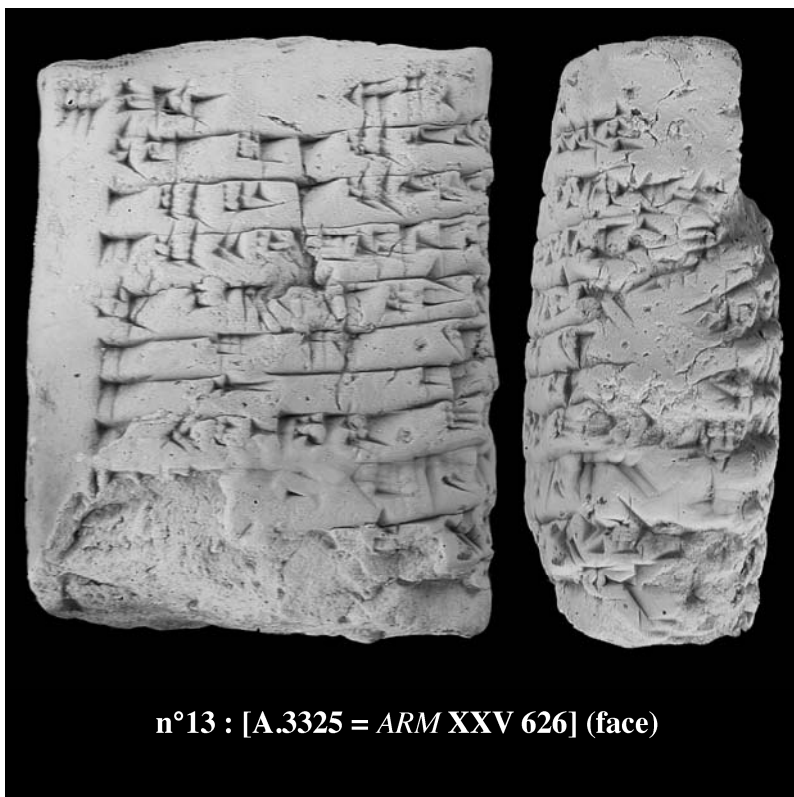
Biblio. : pour les l. 1-11, cf. J.-M. Durand, *MARI* 6, p. 139  
 (l. 11 fait d'objet d'une copie : *ibidem*, p. 126).

<sup>54</sup> Le passage est écrit sur une ligne effacée.

<sup>1</sup> 6 mines d'or : <sup>2</sup> placage d'une représentation de Dagan ;  
<sup>3</sup> d'une représentation du roi, d'une représentation de  
Yakrub-El ; <sup>4</sup> de trois représentations de montagnes et pay-  
sage ("espaces"), <sup>5</sup> lesquelles sont devant la poitrine <du  
trône> ; <sup>6</sup> (placage) de deux Uridu ; <sup>7</sup> de deux Lamassatum,  
<sup>8</sup> d'une montagne au milieu, <sup>9</sup> d'un barreau (?) et d'(un motif)  
*abussatum*, <sup>10</sup> [lesquels sont en bas de] la « poitrine » <du  
trône> ; <sup>11</sup> [(placage)... d'une lune et d'un] soleil [... ?], *lesquels  
sont en haut de la « poitrine »* <du trône>].

<sup>1'</sup> [... Placage... de la planche] de la face du siège de Dagan ;  
<sup>2'-3'</sup> 1 ½ mine d'or, placage de deux *Lamassatum* et d'un pay-  
sage ("espaces") sur la planche de droite ;  
<sup>4'-5'</sup> 1 ½ mine d'or placage de deux *Lamassatum* et d'un pay-  
sage ("espaces") sur la planche de gauche ;  
<sup>6'-8'</sup> 4 mines d'or, placage de deux "clous" qui seront mis à la  
place des accoudoirs (*arattéens*) ;  
<sup>9'-10'</sup> 1 mine [... d'or...].  
<sup>11'-12'</sup> Total : 20 mines x sicles d'or : placages du trône excepté  
le socle.

**l. 3 :** pour Yakrub-El, cf. Ll. Feliu, *The God Dagan in Bronze Age  
Syria*, CHANE 19, 2003, p. 117-118.



n°13 : [A.3325 = *ARM XXV* 626] (face)



n°13 : [A.3325 = *ARM XXV* 626] (revers)

**Année 13 : le *nūbalum* du Dagan**

**?/IV/ZL 13**





n°14 [M.10441] (revers)

**n°14 : [M.10441]**

- 2 mana 13 x[ su ku-babbar]  
 2 ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi ih-zi [ša i-ir-tim]  
 e-li-im ù 1 [...]  
 4 15 2/3 su ku<sub>3</sub>-[babbar]  
 ki-la<sub>2</sub>-bi  
 6 1 gi-iš-ti-im? ša a-ma-ar-[ti]  
 T. 14 su ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar  
 8 𒀭ki<sup>1</sup>-la<sub>2</sub>-bi  
 [...]

- R. 10 [ša<sup>ḡiṣ</sup> nu-ba-lim]  
 ša<sup>ḡiṣ</sup> m[a<sub>2</sub><sup>??</sup>-ga<sub>2</sub>-an-na]  
 12 a-na<sup>1</sup> ra-ka-si-im<sup>1</sup> tu-[ú-ur]  
 si-la<sub>2</sub> ia-šu-ub-a-šar  
 14 aš-šum bu-ul-lu-uṭ [ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar]  
 a-hu-ne-e ru-uk-[ku-us]  
 16 (Espace blanc.)  
 iti a-bi-im u[<sub>4</sub> x-kam]  
 T. 18 [mu] zi-im-r[i-li-im]  
 [á]š-la-ak-k[a-a<sup>ki</sup> ša-ni-iš]  
 20 iṣ-ba-[tu]

<sup>1</sup> 2 mines 13 sicles [d'argent], <sup>2</sup> pesée du placage [de la « poitrine »] <sup>3</sup> supérieure <du siège> (?) et d'un [...].

<sup>4</sup> 15 2/3 sicles d'argent, <sup>5</sup> pesée <du placage> <sup>6</sup> d'un barreau de la planche.

<sup>7</sup> 14 sicles d'argent, <sup>8</sup> pesée de <sup>9-10</sup> [..., faisant partie du palanquin] <sup>11</sup> en bois de Ma[gan (?)].

<sup>12</sup> C'est retourné (à l'atelier) pour l'assemblage. <sup>13</sup> Confié à Yašūb-Ašar. <sup>14</sup> En raison de la ventilation [de l'argent],

<sup>15</sup> (l'argent) a été constitué en petits lots. (Date).

**l. 15 :** pour le parallèle à cette expression, cf. A.4108 [ARM XXV 707 = ARM XXXII, p. 297].

**l. 16 :** la restitution du verbe est hypothétique. Le sens de l'expression peut néanmoins être reconstruit à partir de M.11274 [ARM XXV 63 = ARM XXXII, p. 307] relatif à une réception d'argent, destiné notamment à décorer un palanquin (*nūbalum*) : šu-nigin 8 ma-na 10 su ku<sub>3</sub>-babbar i-na a-hu-ne-e a-na ši-pi-ir nu-ba-lim ù hi-ši-ih-ti é-kál-lim « Total : 8 mines 10 sicles d'argent en petits lots pour le travail du palanquin et les besoins du palais. » Cf. aussi S.143, 97 [= ARM XXXII, p. 372-374].



## Annexe

### 21/VIII/ZL 9

#### *n° 15 : [M.10394]*

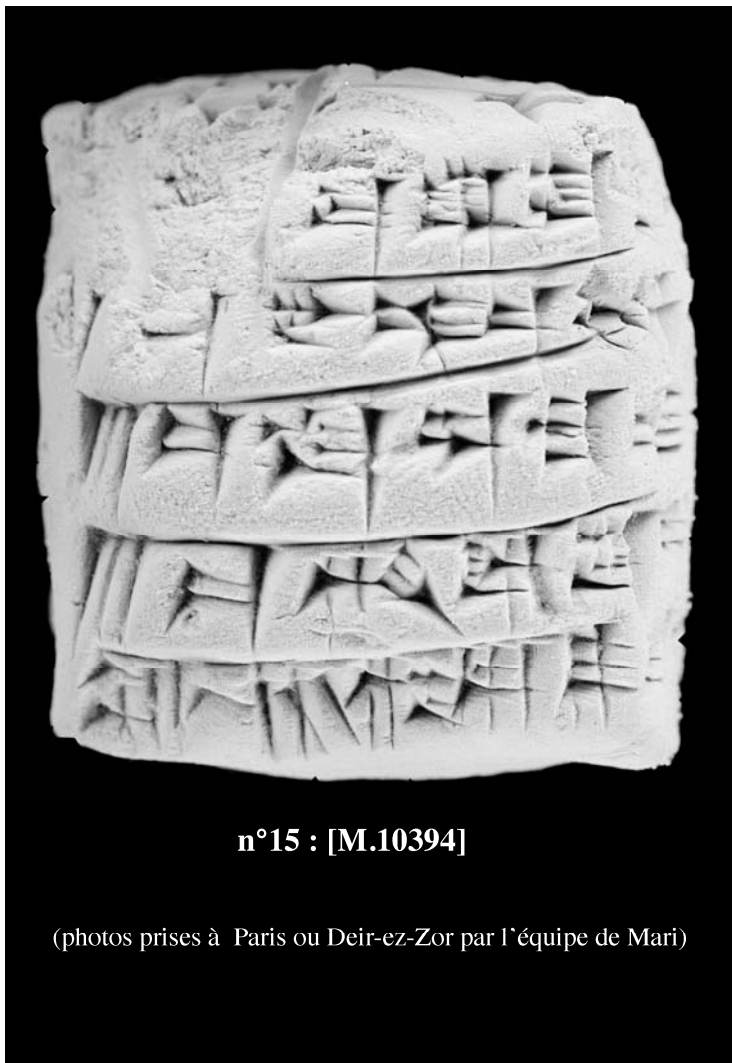
[1<sup>?</sup> ḡiṣ<sup>s</sup> a]-ma-ra-at ḡiṣ<sup>s</sup> gu-za  
2 1 ḡiṣ<sup>s</sup> pu-tum ḡiṣ<sup>s</sup> gu-za  
3 ḡiṣ<sup>s</sup> ka-ab-la-tum  
4 3 ḡiṣ<sup>s</sup> gi-iš-tu-ú  
si-la<sub>2</sub> ha-zi-ip-ku-sú-uh  
6 iti <sup>d</sup>da-gan  
u<sub>4</sub> 21-kam  
8 mu zi-im-ri-li-im  
tí-la-tam  
10 a-na e-la-am-tim<sup>ki</sup>  
[id]-d[i<sup>7</sup>]-nu

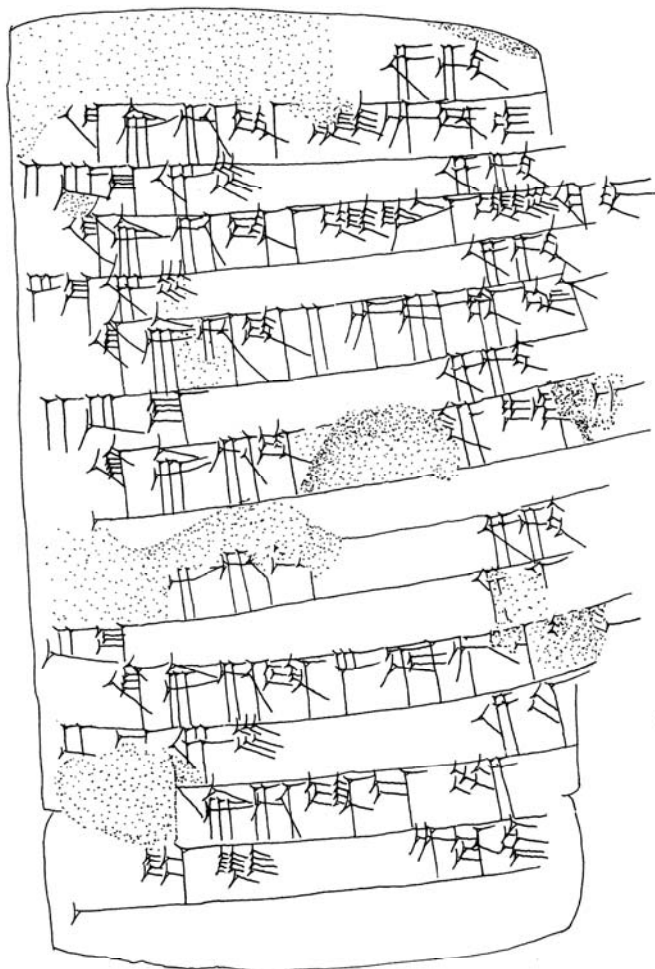
<sup>1</sup>[1] planche de siège, <sup>2</sup>1 'front' <de> siège, <sup>3</sup>3 montants, <sup>4</sup>3 barreaux ; <sup>5</sup> confiés à Hazip-Kusuh. <sup>6</sup>Le mois VIII, <sup>7</sup>le 21<sup>e</sup> jour.

<sup>8-11</sup>L'année où Zimrī-Lim a prêté renfort à l'Élam.

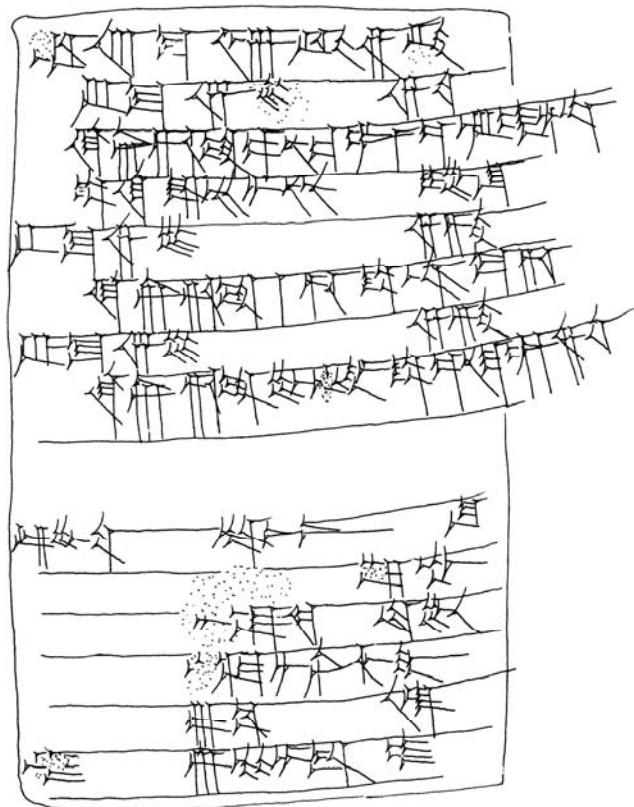
**l. 5** : ce personnage est un ébéniste d'après ARM IX 24 i : 45.

**l. 8-11** : ce nom d'année non standard n'était pas encore répertorié (cf. D. Charpin et N. Ziegler, *FM* V, p. 259-260).





Annexe : [M.10463 = ARM XXV 285 = ARM XXXII, p. 406] (face)



Annexe : [M.10463 = ARM XXV 285 = ARM XXXII, p. 406] (revers)

# Reconstructing the Organization of Old-Babylonian Agricultural Labour Through Dockets

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**Résumé.** Cette contribution s'intéresse aux bordereaux comme moyen d'étude de l'organisation économique de la Mésopotamie paléo-babylonienne. En dépit de leur caractère concis, ces documents représentent une source d'information remarquable sur l'environnement de travail. Il convient donc d'analyser leurs caractéristiques et leurs données, en comparaison avec d'autres documents administratifs tels des contrats ou des listes. On conclura enfin quant à l'organisation de la main d'œuvre agricole en Mésopotamie durant la première moitié du deuxième millénaire avant notre ère.

## Introduction

The organization of agricultural work in Mesopotamia was quite complex. In this paper<sup>1</sup> I will attempt to provide a possible reconstruction of some aspects of this organization in Northern Mesopotamia during the Old Babylonian period, based on administrative documents kept in the British Museum, which I have personally been studying, as well as previously published documents. The texts taken into account refer especially to the period of the First Dynasty of Babylonia, from the reign of Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.) until the reign of Samsu-ditana (1625-1595 B.C.).

I will initially present an overview of the most important studies, then the typologies of texts I have analyzed, focusing on the

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<sup>1</sup> This article is part of the paper I presented at the Oxford Postgraduate Conference in Assyriology (OPCA) 2016, Oxford 15th-16th April 2016, which was entitled: "Reconstructing the organisation of Old-Babylonian Mesopotamian sheep-farming and agricultural labour through dockets".

dockets, on their features and on the data they provide. The dockets will then be compared to contracts and lists in order to better understand the duties and tasks of the people mentioned. Finally, the dockets, contracts and lists will be used for reconstructing some aspects of the management of agricultural work, especially for providing some enlightenment on the hierarchical organization of the arable lands.

## 1. Previous studies

My study began with extant editions of texts, namely contracts, lists and receipts, focusing on the analysis of dockets as a means for reconstructing the ways in which Old-Babylonian Mesopotamian agricultural labour was organized. Studies by Stol (1976: 97-108), Harris (1975: especially 245-48), de Jong Ellis (1976), Yoffee (1977: in particular 95-102, where previous studies are discussed), Skaist (1994: 152) are still fundamental in our understanding of these texts, and more especially those carried out by Charpin (1982; 1993; 2000; 2005a-b, 2014).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, a certain number of dockets have already been published; the first systematic study of them is dated to more than a century ago, and was carried out by Keiser in 1914. His work presents many dockets dated to the Larsa Dynasty<sup>3</sup> and a number of dockets belonging to the time of the First Dynasty of Babylon,<sup>4</sup> probably originating from Sippar. He grouped all the texts he published in four classes: bullae or labels, tags in the shape of tablets, archive labels, and animal tags.

<sup>2</sup> For the publication of texts see also Van Lerberghe-Voet (1991), especially 78-81, 84, nos. 53-56, 60 [lists]. Many others texts from Sippar are published in Dekiere (1994a; 1994b; 1995a; 1995b; 1996; 1997) and Van Lerberghe (1986).

<sup>3</sup> Nos. 17-20b, 21a-22h, and probably 79a-e and 189; of these nos. 18a-b and probably 22b belong to the reign of Rīm-Sîn, while 20b belongs to the reign of Samsu-iluna.

<sup>4</sup> Nos. 20c, 28, 57-70, 157, 182, 185, 187, 188, 190.

Other dockets were published and studied at around the same time,<sup>5</sup> and in 1962 Weitemeyer published an important study, still essential for the reconstruction of the hiring of workers in the Old Babylonian period. His book also contained 61 Old Babylonian dockets,<sup>6</sup> the majority of which dated to the reign of Hammurabi and likely came from Tell ed-Dēr, now identified with Sippar-Amnanum,<sup>7</sup> just to the South of Sippar Yahrurum.<sup>8</sup> Among the more recent publications of Old Babylonian dockets we have to remember Gomi's (1980), Spar's (1988),<sup>9</sup> Charpin-Durand's (1981), Sigrist (2003) and the study of Dalley *et al.* (2005).<sup>10</sup>

## 2. General considerations about dockets

Our understanding of Mesopotamian economy and social dynamics is mostly based on an imposing amount of original administrative documentation. The administrative texts I will consider in this paper belong to different typologies, among which we can remember: contracts for the hiring of harvest labourers; contracts for the loan of a specific number of harvesters; lists of numbers and lists of workers followed by personal names; lists of barley quantities for harvesters; record of quantities of silver for

<sup>5</sup> We can recall here the contributions of Ungnad (1909); Thureau-Dangin (1910); Kohler-Ungnad (1911); Lindl (1913); Koschaker (1923); Lautner (1936), Jacobsen (1939).

<sup>6</sup> See Weitemeyer (1962: 12-19, nos. 1-61, 54-58, nos. 100-114—dockets for harvesters—, 59-60, nos. 116-122), with reviews of Harris (1963: 251-52) and Falkenstein (1965: 298-300).

<sup>7</sup> Sippar was a twin-city, and consisted of two major tells, Sippar-Yahrurum (Abu Habbah) and Sippar-Amnānum (Tell ed-Dēr), as has been pointed out by Charpin (1988). Probably the names of the two cities refer to names of two important nomadic tribes, Yahrurum and Amnānum, already known from the Mari letters. It is probable that these tribes settled around the two tells, Abu Habbah and Tell ed-Dēr (cf. Kupper 1957). The two cities are sometimes mentioned under other names: Sippar-šērim and Sippar-rabum, Sippar-ša-šamaš and Sippar-Annunitum, or Sippar-dūrum and Sippar-ša-šāti, respectively.

<sup>8</sup> See Dalley *et al.* (2005: 233, photographs of selected dockets).

<sup>9</sup> Especially Spar (1988: 68), no. 51.

<sup>10</sup> See also Rositani (2011, 2014 and 2015).

the harvesting; texts that record debts of harvesters. In particular, I will focus on the three-sided clay pyramids-referred to as *bullae*, tags or docketts dealing with workers and harvesters, parallelepiped tags or docketts, and receipts of harvesters (parallelepiped, but also ovoid, triangular, prismatic, spherical etc.).

Docketts, in fact, can be different in shape, length, formulae, perforations and contents. In general, docketts are a small lump of clay usually inscribed and/or sealed.<sup>11</sup> Budge (1920) describes the docketts he published as “pyramidal clay objects” and underlines that in the apex of some of them “were the remains of thin pieces of fibrous wood”. The presence of “a hole at the apex derived from a reed” in the apex of some pyramidal docketts dealing with hired workers was also noticed by Weitmeyer (1962). This piece of wood, inserted after the docket was inscribed, often deformed or curved the wedge heads of the cuneiform signs near the hole. Nevertheless, accordingly to Keiser (1914),<sup>12</sup> the clay of the docketts was pressed on a cord.<sup>13</sup> In the inner part of some broken docketts already published, and also in a few docketts I am currently studying, kept at the British Museum, the impression of the spirals of the cord and of some knots on the soft clay is plainly visible.<sup>14</sup> The spiral imprints of the cord are sometimes visible also on the outer surface of some docketts,<sup>15</sup> where we can often see the finger markings of the scribe who made the docket. Moreover, one can follow the presence of the cord thanks to the thickness of the docket, which is larger where the clay covers the cord or the knots. It seems therefore that there are two possible reconstructions of the docket supports: a thin piece of wood or reed, and a cord.

<sup>11</sup> These “pyramidal clay objects” have been referred to in different ways: Thureau-Dangin (1910) calls the 10 texts he publishes: “bulles tétraèdres”; Kohler-Ungnad (1911): “Tonplomben”. Few years later, Jacobsen (1939) published another 11 “pyramidal clay objects” (texts nos. 55-65), from the National Museum in Copenhagen, probably coming from the Baghdad area; these docketts were similar to those described by Budge (1920: 268) coming from Tell ed-Dēr.

<sup>12</sup> Keiser (1914: 16-17).

<sup>13</sup> See Keiser (1914), Plate VIII.

<sup>14</sup> See Rositani (2015: 26).

<sup>15</sup> See Rositani (2015: 24-25).



Moreover, the perforations could be quite varied: most of the dockets have one, two<sup>16</sup> or three holes. The pyramidal dockets often have a single hole in the apex, whose dimensions vary from 1.5 to 2.5 cm, indicating that the cord used was quite thick. The olive-shaped, elliptical and peach-stone-shaped dockets, as well as the semicircular and spherical ones were completely pierced, usually with an axial perforation. In some of these the hole is quite small (from 0.5 to 0.9 cm). The tetrahedral dockets, similar to small tablets, usually have three holes: one in the middle of one edge and two at the corners of the opposite edge. Triangular and flat dockets also have three holes, one per corner.

### 3. Docket typologies and registrations

The features of the dockets are relevant to their use. In fact, dockets could be fastened to one or more objects thanks to a cord which crossed them through an axial perforation<sup>17</sup> or they could hang from the end of a string which was fastened around different objects.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, they could hang from a cord or a piece of wood or reed that made it possible to carry them, and more dockets could be fastened together in a sort of bunch of dockets. Finally, thanks to the piece of wood or reed, the dockets could perhaps be attached to some particular kinds of tablets.

The most common dockets were the first two, attached to one or more cords, fastened around merchandise, textiles, animals, bundles, sacks, baskets or the like.<sup>19</sup> The objects or the content of

<sup>16</sup> These dockets are axially perforated.

<sup>17</sup> Such as for ex. the olive-shaped, elliptical and peach-stone-shaped dockets, or the semicircular and spherical ones.

<sup>18</sup> Such as for ex. the pyramidal dockets, which often have a single hole in the apex, or the triangular and the tetrahedral ones, which have usually three holes.

<sup>19</sup> For an overview of the different typologies of dockets see: Charpin (2001); Dalley *et al.* (2005: especially pp. 6-8 with reference to previous bibliography and dockets nos. 298-374); De Graef (2009, with previous bibliography); Owen (1988: especially p. 306); Sigrist (1990: especially texts nos. 81-84); Sigrist (2003); Spar (1988: especially texts nos. 51, 63); Van De Mieroop (1993: 167); Veenhof (1986);

the objects from which the dockets hung were usually mentioned in the text engraved on the docket; accordingly, the entries mentioned in the dockets are also quite different, for example quantities of barley, flour, oil, reeds, silver, copper, wool, dates, animals (such as cattle, sheep or goats).

The great variety in docket shapes has been studied in connection to the diverse typologies of docket registrations. It seems that the nature of the contexts did not influence or decide the shape, in fact it seems to have been a matter of choice for the scribe to use the shape best adapted to the immediate use of the dockets, i.e. the shape he could most easily make.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, S. Dalley<sup>21</sup> suggests that “the connection was deliberately varied, like a password, to make sure that fraud was difficult”.

Among the dockets of the second type, i.e. those hanging from a cord that made it possible to carry them and fasten them together as a bunch, we might include the ones that register the number of days worked by hired worker(s), *lú ĥun.gá*, harvester(s), *lú še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>*, reed-worker(s), *lú ad.gi*, bricklayer(s), *lú šitim*, mat maker(s), *lú ad.kid*, carrier(s), *lú zābīlum*, etc. In some dockets, indeed, we can see the barley rations or wages for workers.<sup>22</sup>

Many of these dockets have the same structure: the inscription mentions the number and the type of worker(s), followed by a personal name, and by the date, usually complete (month, day and year). Therefore, these dockets record that a specified num-

Waetzoldt (1986); Weitemeyer (1962). See also Rositani (2011: especially pp. 35-40, 163-193, with texts nos. 80-107, 109-113, 117-122); Rositani (2014 and 2015).

<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Keiser (1914), analyzing the different typologies of dockets he published, outlined some chronological changes in the prevalent use of one shape instead of another for a particular type of record. In Keiser's opinion a chronological fluctuation could be seen in the choice of a shape for a particular type of record “in the different centres during different periods”. See Keiser (1914: 10-12).

<sup>21</sup> See Dalley *et al.* (2005: 9).

<sup>22</sup> On the use of the dockets in the retribution system of hired workers in the Old Babylonian period Weitemeyer 1962 is still essential. See also Dalley *et al.* (2005: 6-10). I have recently studied some dockets and receipts dealing with harvesters' work (Rositani 2011, 35-40, 163-193, with texts Nos. 80-107, 109-113, 117-122).

ber of people worked on a certain day. They have been explained as receipts for the work done<sup>23</sup> on a certain day by one or more labourers, sealed by the work controller. Scholars used to believe that the men mentioned in the dockets were the labourers themselves. Each man was given a docket when the work was done, and this allowed him to claim wages. As a result, they thought that the name on the docket represented the worker himself, the man to whom the wages were to be paid, so that the dockets were meant to be exchanged into wages directly by the workers. Another possible reconstruction, instead, would be that the personal names registered in the dockets and in the receipts do not refer to harvesters or workers, but rather to the providers who supplied them, to whom the workers' wages were paid. I will try here to support this latter hypothesis thanks to the analysis of data deriving from dockets and other administrative texts, such as contracts and lists.

On some dockets we find many workers, but immediately after the indication of the number and the qualification of the workers, only one personal name is inscribed, which is most likely the head man of the group, for example in:

Weitemeyer (1962), no. 115 (6th.II.Hammurabi 34):

6 lú *za-bi-lu*/dumu.ki

“6 carriers Mār-eršetim”

Weitemeyer (1962), no. 116 (15th.V.Ammi-ditana 6):

3 ad.kid / <sup>1</sup>I-šú-AN<sup>tum</sup>

“3 mat makers Išu-iltum”

Weitemeyer (1962), no. 118 (10th.VII.Samsu-iluna 3 or 4):

3 lú šitim/SIG-<sup>d</sup>İš-ḫa-ra

“3 bricklayers Ipiq-Išḫara”

<sup>23</sup> See for eg. Lindl (1913: 367, no. 1485) calls the dockets “Arbeitbestätigungen”, receipts for a job done. Koschaker (1923: 160-162) suggests we interpret the clay *bullae* as “Arbeitsmarken” or “chits”, i.e. always receipts for job done.

Weitemeyer (1962), No. 119 (10th. XII. Samsu-iluna 2):

6<sup>2</sup> lú šitim/SIG-<sup>d</sup>lš<sup>2</sup>-l<sup>2</sup>a-ra<sup>2</sup>

“6<sup>2</sup> bricklayers Ipiq-lš<sup>2</sup>hara(?)”

Accordingly, on the dockets registering harvesters, we find that they occur often in teams of 6, 9 or 12, or more rarely in smaller groups of 2, 3 or 4, always followed by one name, which is most likely to be the head man of the group. Here are some more examples:

Rositani (2011), no. 87. BM 98022 (29th.I.Hammurabi 35)

*F.a* 1. 6 lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>

2. *ri-ša-tum*

“6 harvesters Rīšatum”

Rositani (2011), no. 89. BM 98043 (29th.I.Hammurabi 35)

*F.a* 1. 12 lú še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>

2. *wa-tar-nu-úr-ša*

“12 harvesters Watar-nurša”

Rositani (2011), no. 92. BM 98020 (4th.II.Hammurabi 35)

*F.a* 1. 6 lú še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>

2. *wa-tar-nu-úr-šu*

“6 harvesters Watar-nuršu”

Rositani (2011), no. 94. BM 97925 (3rd.II.Hammurabi 39)<sup>24</sup>

*Obv.* 1. 3 lú še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>

2. *ri-ša-tum*

“3 harvesters Rīšatum”

Weitemeyer (1962), no. 114 (19th.I.Hammurabi 35):

4 lú še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub> / *dumu.ki*

“4 harvesters Mār-eršetim”

<sup>24</sup> The document has a parallelepiped shape with two square faces, whereas all the others are three-sided pyramids.

For this reconstruction, one particular docket might prove relevant, in which the head man of the group is clearly qualified:

Weitemeyer (1962), no. 100 (11th. VII. Ha 36):

4 lú uku<sup>?</sup>.uš / ugula <sup>d</sup>MAR.TU-*a-bi*

“4 soldiers, overseer Amurru-abi”

The role of Amurru-abī, overseer, is explicitly indicated. Moreover, we can see that the same person, Mār-eršetim, occurs in Weitemeyer (1962), no. 115, in connection with carriers, and in Weitemeyer (1962), no. 114, in connection with harvesters. This clearly indicates that he cannot be the worker himself but the workers’ provider, and not connected with a specific typology of labourer, or with a change from one to another between Hammurabi 34 (carriers) and Hammurabi 35 (harvesters).

In this way we can consider other harvest dockets as being records of the delivery of the harvesters by the head men of the gangs to certain fields:

Weitemeyer (1962), no. 108 (4th<sup>?</sup>. I. ...)

6 lú še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub> / *E-ri-ib-Sin* / a.šà *Bé-la-nu-um*

“6 harvesters Erib-Sîn (in the) field of Belānum”

Rositani (2011), no. 86.BM 98029 (9th<sup>?</sup>.I.Ha 32<sup>?</sup>):

*F.a* 1. 2 lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>

2. ša u<sub>4</sub>.1.kam

*F.b* 3. *a-na a.gàr gu.la*

4. *ri-ša-tum*

“2 harvesters for one day in the Big Field, Rīšatum”

So it is possible to suggest the translation:

Weitemeyer (1962), no. 108:

“6 harvesters Erib-Sîn (brought in the) field of Belānum”

Rositani (2011), no. 86:

“2 harvesters for one day Rīšatum (brought) in the Big Field”

#### 4. Reading dockets through contracts and lists

Comparing the dockets with the contracts for the hiring of harvesters is extremely useful for a better understanding of the roles taken on by various people. All the harvest contracts have a similar structure: each one registers that a person, qualified by the patronymic and/or the title or occupation—in some texts we find two, three or four people (all followed by the father's name and/or by the title or occupation)—has taken either silver or a barley allocation from another person (qualified by the patronymic and/or the title or occupation) “for the harvesting” or “for the harvesters”. The contracts continue prescribing the duty of the beneficiaries: “at harvest time he shall go with the harvester” or better “he shall bring the harvesters”, according to the interpretation of these texts already proposed,<sup>25</sup> “if he does not do it, he (will be liable) according to the decree of the king”; following that are the witnesses, the date, one or more seals and often the indication: *kišib PN*, usually on the left edge of the tablet. In some contracts, especially those dating back to Hammurabi's reign, some additional information is found, such as how many workers were hired or for how many days they were hired, occasionally in some texts the barley supplies to feed the workers also feature.

The assignment recorded in these harvest contracts is for the payment of a retainer owed to labour providers who were expected to hire the harvesters and take them to the field or fields of the conveyor at harvest time.

The occurrence of the same personal names in harvest dockets and in harvest hiring contracts as beneficiaries of the assignments reinforces the hypothesis that the personal names occurring in the harvest dockets could be identified as “labour providers”. Here are some examples:

Weitemeyer (1962), no. 108 (4th<sup>2</sup>.I. ...):

“6 lú še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub> *E-ri-ib-Sin*(30) a.šà *Bé-la-nu-um* kaskal u<sub>4</sub>.2.kam  
nì.šu 'Lu-ša-lim”

<sup>25</sup> See for ex. Rositani (2011: 28 with previous bibliography); Spar (1988: 70), text no. 53.

Weitemeyer (1962), no. 109 (10th.I. ...):

“9 lú še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub> *E-ri-ib-Sin*(30) a.šà *Pa-le-x* nì.šu <sup>i</sup>*Lu-ša-lim-be-lī*”

The same name occurs probably also in Weitemeyer (1962), nos. 110 and 111, with the same function of bringing the harvesters to the field, as we have seen before, and in particular in a harvest contract, Pinches (1898),<sup>26</sup> text 44c: 12 (Bu. 91-5-9, 2425), where Erib-Sîn is the ‘labour provider’ who receives 2 shekels of silver in order to bring the harvesters to the field at harvest time, nì.šu (under control of) Lū-šalim-bēlī, exactly as in docket no. 109, and probably also in docket no. 108, where Lū-šalim could possibly be an abbreviation of the same name.

It is also useful to compare the lists. As we have seen above, there are different kinds of lists; on the one hand, we have lists of numbers followed by personal names,<sup>27</sup> and lists of workers or harvesters followed by personal names: both kinds of list deal with harvesters or workers supplied by the people indicated in the second column of the texts, i.e. ‘labour providers’; on the other hand we see lists of quantities of barley followed by personal names (i.e. wages lists) and lists of barley rations assigned to workers or groups of men per working day, the so-called attendance lists.<sup>28</sup>

The lists of the number of harvesters followed by personal names register more than one group of workers as well as the providers’ names, as we can see for ex. in Rositani (2011), no. 79 (not dated):<sup>29</sup>

Obv.	1.	5 lú.še.gur <sub>10</sub> .ku <sub>5</sub> <i>ri-iš-d</i> utu
	2.	3 <i>ip-qá-<sup>†</sup>tum<sup>†</sup></i>
	3.	3 <i>ib-ni-d</i> mar. <sup>†</sup> tu <sup>†</sup>
	4.	3 <i>ib-ni-d</i> kab.ta
	5.	12 <i>ib-ni-d</i> mar.tu

<sup>26</sup> See also Shorr (1913), VAB V, no. 167; Weitemeyer (1962: 57).

<sup>27</sup> See Van Lerberghe-Voet (1991: 78-81, 84, nos. 53-56 and 60).

<sup>28</sup> See Lautner (1936: 204-205).

<sup>29</sup> The text is circular, with 67 mm in diameter.

6.	14	ṛi-din <sup>1</sup> -é.a
7.	10	ṛ <sup>d</sup> ṛé.a-tukul-ti
8.	13	ta-ri-bu-um

(Obv. 1-8) “5 harvesters Rīš-Šamaš; 3 Ipqatum; 3 Ibni-Amurru; 3 Ibni-Kabta; 12 Ibni-Amurru; 14 Iddin-Ea; 10 Ea-tukultī; 13 Taribum”.

The same names occur in some dockets:

- Ea-tukultī: Rositani (2011), no. 97:2 (29th<sup>2</sup>.I.Hammurabi 40<sup>2</sup>).
- Ibni-Amurru: Rositani (2011), nos. 95:2 (26th.I.Hammurabi 40<sup>2</sup>); 102:2 (4th.II.Hammurabi 40<sup>2</sup>); 104:2 (7th.I.Hammurabi 41<sup>2</sup>); 110:2 (3rd.II.Samsu-iluna 3).
- Iddin-Ea: Rositani (2011), nos. 96:2 (28th.I.Hammurabi 40<sup>2</sup>); 99:2 ([ ]I.Hammurabi 40<sup>2</sup>); 100:2 (1st.II.Hammurabi 40<sup>2</sup>).
- Taribum: Rositani (2011), nos. 98:2 (30th.I.Hammurabi 40<sup>2</sup>); 101:2 (4th.II.Hammurabi 40<sup>2</sup>); 103:6 (6th.II.Hammurabi 40<sup>2</sup>); 105:2 (7th.I.Hammurabi 41<sup>2</sup>); 107:2 (11th.I.Hammurabi 41<sup>2</sup>).

Moreover, some of these people also occur in harvest contracts as labour providers:

- Ea-tukultī, son of Iddin-Ea: Rositani (2011), nos. 8:4-5 (tablet) and 9:4-5 (case: 5th.X.Hammurabi 38).
- Ea-tukultī and Iddin-Ea occur together in Rositani (2011), no. 19:2-3<sup>30</sup> (22nd<sup>2</sup>.X<sup>2</sup>.Hammurabi 41).
- Ibni-Amurru also occurs as labour provider in: Rositani (2011), nos. 11:3 (tablet) and 12:4' (case), (10th.XI.Hammurabi 39).
- Rīš-Šamaš occurs as labour provider in: Rositani (2011), nos. 13:2 (tablet) and 14:2' (case), (10th<sup>2</sup>.XII.Hammurabi 39) where we read: “(Of) 6 harvesters Nabium-mālik is in debt to Rīš-Šamaš”.

<sup>30</sup> “Of 12 harvesters Duššuptum, *naditum* of Šamaš, daughter of Marduk-lamassašu is in debt to Iddin-Ea and Ea-tukultī”.



Finally, a Tarībum occurs as labour provider in Spar (1988: 69) no. 53 Obv. 5-6, qualified as SANGA <sup>d</sup>INANNA A-*ga-de*<sup>ki</sup> DUMU Ip-*qú-An-nu-ni-tum*:

(Obv. 1-7) Tarībum, *šangû* priest of Inanna of Agade, son of Ipqu-Annunītum, received 1 1/3 shekels of silver according to the weight stone of Šamaš [(and) silver] for harvesting [from] Ipqu-Annunītum, the son of Ipqu(?) -Šamaš.

(Obv. 8-Lo.E. 9-10-Rev. 11) On the day of the harvest he shall bring the harvesters. Should he not bring them, (it will be done) according to the king's regulation.

(Rev. 12-15) Witnesses by: Qurdi-Eštar, the *šangû* priest of Annunītum; Ibni-Ilabrat, the *ērib bīti* priest, son of Dingir-...-mah; Šumum-līši, the scribe.

It is worth noticing how close the list Rositani 2011, no. 79 is to contract Rositani (2011), 15(tablet)-16(case), dated to Hammurabi 39, in which Ibni-Amurru occurs again as labour provider of 6 harvesters in the tablet (15:4), but 8 in the case (16:3').

Rositani (2011), no. 15.BM 97836, Tablet (Hammurabi 39):<sup>31</sup>

(Obv. 1-5) 6 harvesters Šilli-Šamaš, 6 (harvesters) Ibni-Kabta, 6 (harvesters) Ipqatum, 6 (harvesters) Ibni-Amurru, son of Šallūrum.

(Lo.E. 6-Rev. 8) (Total) 24 harvesters of Duššuptum, *naditum* of Šamaš, daughter of Marduk-lamassašu.

(Rev. 9-11) With them, at harvest time, they will perform the service.

(Rev. 11-12) If they do not perform the service, (they will be punished according to the) decree of the king.

(Rev. 13-U.E. 15) Before Šamaš-liwwir, son of Etel-Sîn; before Kalūmum.

<sup>31</sup> Rositani (2011), no. 15.BM 97836: Obv. <sup>1</sup>6 lú<sup>1</sup>.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub> šil-lí-<sup>d</sup>utu/<sup>2</sup>6 ib-ni-<sup>d</sup>kab.ta/<sup>3</sup>6 ip-qá-tum/<sup>4</sup>6 ib-ni-<sup>d</sup>mar.ṭu<sup>1</sup>/<sup>5</sup>dumu ṭša<sup>1</sup>-lu-rum/Lo.E. <sup>6</sup>24 lú.[še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>]/<sup>7</sup>ša du-šu-up-tum lukur ṭ<sup>d</sup>utu<sup>1</sup>/Rev. <sup>8</sup>dumu.mí <sup>d</sup>marduk-la-ma-[sà]-ṭ<sup>1</sup>šu<sup>1</sup>/<sup>9</sup>ṭit-ti<sup>1</sup>-šu-nu/<sup>10</sup>u<sub>4</sub>.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>.šè/<sup>11</sup>i-la-ku ú-ul i-la-ku-ṭ<sup>1</sup>ma<sup>1</sup>/<sup>12</sup>ší-im-da-at lugal/<sup>13</sup>iḡi <sup>d</sup>utu-li-wi-ir/U.E. <sup>14</sup>dumu ṭe<sup>1</sup>-tel-<sup>d</sup>EN.ZU/<sup>15</sup>iḡi ka-lu-mu-um/<sup>16</sup>mu kilib gú.dà.a.bi.

Rositani (2011), 16.BM 97836A, Case.<sup>32</sup>

(Obv. 1'-5') 6 harvesters Šilli-Šamaš, 6 (harvesters) Ibni-Kabta, 8 (harvesters) Ibni-Amurru, son of Kurûm, 6 (harvesters) Iqqatum.

(Obv. 6'-Lo.E. 8') (Total) 26 harvesters of Duššuptum, daughter of Marduk-lamassašu.

(Lo.E. 9'-Rev. 11') With them, at harvest time, they will perform the service.

(Rev. 12'-13') If they do not perform the service, (they will be punished according to the) decree of the king.

(Rev. 14'-U.E. 17') Before Tarîbum, son of Iddin-Nin.šubur; before Šamaš-liwwir, son of Etel-Sîn.

Among the labour providers occurring in this text, we can highlight Šilli-Šamaš (Obv. 2) who also occurs in some dockets, for example:

Rositani (2011), no. 80.BM 98003 (21st.I.Hammurabi 29):

"1 lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>/šíl-lí-<sup>d</sup>utu"

Rositani (2011), no. 81.BM 98035 (23rd.I.Hammurabi 29):

"1 lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>/šíl-lí-<sup>d</sup>utu"

Rositani (2011), no. 82.BM 98031 (24th.I.Hammurabi 29):

"1 lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>/šíl-lí-<sup>d</sup>utu"

Rositani (2011), no. 83.BM 98036 (25th.I.Hammurabi 29):

"1 lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>/šíl-lí-<sup>d</sup>utu"

Rositani (2011), no. 91.BM 98002 (4th.II.Hammurabi 35):

"1 lú.š.ē.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>/šíl-lí-<sup>d</sup>utu"

The hypothesis that the people registered in the dockets and in the receipts do not refer to harvesters or workers, but rather to the providers who supplied them, and to whom the workers' wag-

<sup>32</sup> Rositani (2011), no. 16.BM 97836A: Obv. 1[6 lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub> šíl-lí-<sup>d</sup>utu]/<sup>2</sup>6[<sup>1</sup>ib-ni-<sup>d</sup>][kab.ta]/<sup>3</sup>8 ib-ni-<sup>d</sup>mar<sup>1</sup>.tu]/<sup>4</sup>dumu ku-ru-<sup>1</sup>um<sup>1</sup>/56 ip-qá-tum/<sup>6</sup>26 lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>.meš<sup>1</sup>/Lo.E. 7ša du-šu-up-tum/<sup>8</sup>dumu.mí <sup>d</sup>marduk-la-ma-sà-<sup>1</sup>šú]/<sup>9</sup>it-ti<sup>1</sup>-šu-nu/Rev. 10[u<sub>4</sub>.]še.<sup>1</sup>gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>.šè/<sup>11</sup>i-la<sup>1</sup>-ku/<sup>12</sup>ú-ul<sup>1</sup> i-la-ku-ma/<sup>13</sup>ší-im-da-at lugal/<sup>14</sup>igi ta-<sup>1</sup>ri-bu<sup>1</sup>-um/<sup>15</sup>dumu i-[din]-<sup>d</sup>nin.šubur/<sup>16</sup>igi <sup>d</sup>utu-<sup>1</sup>li<sup>1</sup>-wi-ir/U.E. [broken] 17[dumu e-tel-<sup>d</sup>EN.ZU]/<sup>18</sup>[iti ... u<sub>4</sub>.x.kam]/<sup>19</sup>mu kilib gú.dà.a.bi].

es were paid, also seems to be visible from some other lists. Here are a couple of lists of harvesters that are of some interest:

Rositani (2011), no. 41.BM 80284<sup>33</sup> (7.III.Ammi-šaduqa 1):

(Obv. 1-2) List of harvesters who have received the silver [...], (but) did not do the work of harvesting.

(Obv. 3) 2 workers the remainder of the workers Gimillum, son of ...; (Obv. 4-5) 2 workers Šamaš-nāšir, son of Ibbi-Šamaš; ... the total of his work days Taribatū, daughter of Akija; (Obv. 6-7) 3 workers Ibni-Šamaš, son of Marduk-mušallim; ... the total of his work days Ibni-Sîn, son of Ali-bānišu; (Obv. 8) 1 worker Warad-Mamu, son of Bunene-gāmil; (Obv. 9) 8 workers Ilūni, son of ...-tum; (Obv. 10) 2 workers Ib-..., ...; (Obv. 11) 3 workers Warad-Kūbi, son of ...; (Obv. 12) 4 workers Muhra-gāmil ...; (Obv. 13) 6 workers Ahi-lūmur, son of Sîn-eribam; (Obv. 14) 5 workers Gimillum, son of Etel-pû(m); (Obv. 15-16) 2 workers Bēlšunu, son of Warad-ilīšu; ... the total of his work days ... gardener; (Obv. 17) 12 workers Ibija, son of Nūr-Šamaš; (Obv. 18-19) 2 workers Šamaš-iddinam, son of Sîn-aham(?) -iddinam; 13 the total of his work days Tarību son of Akija; (Rev. 20) 5 the total of his work days Ibbi-Sîn, son of Bēlšunu; (Rev. 21) 5 workers Šamaš-rabi, son of Rabi-anni; (Rev. 22) 1 worker Warad-Kūbi, son of Bēlšunu; (Rev. 23) 9 workers Huzālum, son of Imgur-Sin.

This text informs us that the people mentioned have already received silver but on the 7th day of month III they have not yet

<sup>33</sup> Rositani (2011), no. 41.BM 80284: Obv.<sup>1</sup>[qá]-[ti] erén še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub> ša kù.[babbar] [ ]/<sup>2</sup>[im]-[hu-ru] še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub> la [il]-[li-ku]/<sup>3</sup>2 erén ib.tag<sub>4</sub> erén šu gi-mil-lum dumu ba/ma x x/<sup>4</sup>2 erén <sup>d</sup>utu-na-ši-ir dumu i-bi-<sup>d</sup>utu/<sup>5</sup>[x] gi-me-er u<sub>4</sub>-ma-ti-šu ta-ri-ba-tum dumu<sup>sic</sup> a-ki-ia-a/<sup>6</sup>3 erén ib-ni-<sup>d</sup>utu dumu <sup>d</sup>marduk-mu-ša-al<sup>7</sup>-lim/<sup>7</sup>[x] gi-me-er u<sub>4</sub>-ma-ti-šu ib-ni-<sup>d</sup>EN.ZU dumu a-li-ba-nu-šu/<sup>8</sup>1 erén [ir]-<sup>d</sup>ma-mu dumu <sup>d</sup>bu-ne-ne-[ga]-mil/<sup>9</sup>8 erén [i-lu]-ni dumu [ ]-tum/<sup>10</sup>2<sup>1</sup> erén ib-[x x] [ ]/[gu<sup>2</sup>.ia]<sup>11</sup>3 erén ir-ku-bi [dumu] [ ]/[x]<sup>12</sup>4 erén <sup>d</sup>mu-uh-ra-[ga-mil] [ ]/<sup>13</sup>6<sup>1</sup> erén a-hi-lu-mur dumu <sup>d</sup>EN.ZU-e-ri-ba-am/<sup>14</sup>5 erén gi-mil-lum dumu e-tel-pu/<sup>15</sup>2<sup>1</sup> erén be-el-šu-nu dumu ir-ì-lí-šu/<sup>16</sup>[x] gi-me-er u<sub>4</sub>-ma-ti-šu AN BA É ŠA nu.<sup>gis</sup>kiri<sub>6</sub>/<sup>17</sup>12<sup>1</sup> erén i-bi-ia dumu nu-úr-<sup>d</sup>utu/<sup>18</sup>2<sup>1</sup> erén <sup>d</sup>utu-i-din-nam dumu <sup>d</sup>EN.ZU.šeš<sup>7</sup>-i-din-nam/<sup>19</sup>13 gi-me-er u<sub>4</sub>-ma-ti-šu ta-ri-bu dumu a-ki-[ia-a]<sup>1</sup>/Rev. <sup>20</sup>5 gi-me-er u<sub>4</sub>-ma-ti-šu<sup>1</sup> i-bi-<sup>d</sup>EN.ZU<sup>1</sup> dumu be-el-šu-nu/<sup>21</sup>5 erén <sup>d</sup>utu<sup>1</sup>-ra-bi dumu ra-bi-an-ni/<sup>22</sup>1 erén ir-ku-bi dumu be-el-šu-nu/<sup>23</sup>9 erén hu-za-lum dumu im-[gur]-sin(30)/(uninscribed)/<sup>24</sup>iti sig<sub>4</sub>.a u<sub>4</sub>.7.kam/<sup>25</sup>mu am-mi-ša-du-TA lugal.[e].

done the harvesting work. If we assume that the lists of barley rations assigned to workers or groups of men per working day were created while the wages were being paid, and that the lists of quantities of barley followed by personal names were written later, after the harvesters had been paid, as a final report, then we find here yet another kind of list, which registers workers and working days in connection with some people. Obviously, the majority of the harvest dockets are dated during the first two months of the year, when the harvest took place, whereas the harvest contracts are usually dated a few months before. The great majority of them are in fact dated between months IX and XII, in order to make sure that the providers will bring the harvesters to the fields at harvest time, since a good harvest depends absolutely on their being in the fields. So the harvesters' providers were usually paid in advance, entirely or in part, as were the people mentioned on this list, who we can suppose are not harvesters—paid when the work was done—but labour providers, usually paid in advance to coincide with harvest time.

Also another text, Rositani (2011), no. 72.BM 25321<sup>34</sup> (not dated), might well be of some interest:

(Obv. 1-2) 27 harvesters (from/of) Sîn-iddinam.

(Obv. 3-5) 4 Mannûm, 4 Tutu-nišu, 2 ...; (Obv. 6-Rev. 9) 2 Ba/Madalum,<sup>35</sup> ... Šamaš..., 4 ..., 4 ½ Marduk-nāšir; (Rev. 10) 3//6 ½ Šumi-eršetim...; (Rev. 11) 7 ½ ... Ilātum; (Rev. 12) 7 ½ Nin.pirig-abī;

(Rev. 13) 10 ⅓ Būr-Adad; (Rev. 14) 4 ⅔ Šamaš-ašared-ilī.

(Rev. 15- U.E. 17) 60 harvesters, possession (of) Sîn-iddinam and Ipqu-Ištar.

<sup>34</sup> Rositani (2011), no. 72: Obv. <sup>1</sup>27 lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>.meš/<sup>2d</sup>EN.ZU-i-din-nam / <sup>3</sup>4 ma-nu-um / <sup>4</sup>4 <sup>d</sup>tu-tu-ni-šu / <sup>5</sup>2 x<sup>1</sup>.MU.LAM/DA [x KI/DI] / <sup>6</sup>2 ba<sup>2</sup>/ma<sup>2</sup>l-da-lum[ ] / <sup>7</sup>[ ] <sup>d</sup>utu[ ] / Lo.E. <sup>8</sup>4 ŠU.BA/ZU.DI/KI.IŠ<sup>7</sup>.NI<sup>1</sup> / Rev. <sup>9</sup>4 1/2 <sup>d</sup>marduk-na-šir<sup>1</sup> / <sup>10</sup>3//6<sup>1</sup> 1/2 šu-mi-ki [x x<sup>1</sup>] / <sup>11</sup>7 1/2 x<sup>35</sup> i-la-tum / <sup>12</sup>7 1/2 <sup>d</sup>NIN.PIRIG-a-bi / <sup>13</sup>10 1/3 <sup>d</sup>bur<sup>1</sup>-adad / <sup>14</sup>4 2/3 <sup>d</sup>utu-a-ša<sup>1</sup> re<sup>1</sup>-ed-i-lí / <sup>15</sup>1 šu-ši lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub> / U.E. <sup>16</sup>níg.[ga<sup>1</sup> sin(30)-i-din-nam / <sup>17</sup>ù ip-quí-iš<sub>8</sub>-tár<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> A Badalum, son of Ikunam, occurs in Waterman (1913), no. 5, Rev. 4 (Ham-murabi 15).

It is likely that in this text the numbers refer to working days.<sup>36</sup> The harvesters are indicated as *níg.ga* of *Sîn-iddinam* and *Ipqu-Ištar*, whereas the personal names listed in the text could belong to labour providers. In fact, two of them, *Nin.pirig-abī* and *Šumi-eršetim*, occur elsewhere as labour providers: *Nin.pirig-abī* occurs as provider of 12<sup>7</sup> harvesters in the docket Rositani (2011), no. 111 (4th.II.Samsu.iluna 3),<sup>37</sup> whereas *Šumi-eršetim* occurs in the list Rositani (2011), no. 10:14-15 (13th.VI.Hammurabi 39).<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, *Sîn-iddinam* also features in a receipt:

Rositani (2011), 108.BM 85184<sup>39</sup> (14th.I.Samsu-iluna 1):  
“15 harvesters of *Sîn-iddinam*, *Awīl-ilī* received”<sup>40</sup>

We can also say that the harvesters recorded in the receipt were *níg.ga*, possession of *Sîn-iddinam*. *Awīl-ilī*, who also occurs in another text, which registers the delivery of 15 harvesters:

Rositani (2011), no. 115. BM 85189<sup>41</sup> (10th.I.Samsu-iluna “un  
*sag.gi<sub>6</sub>.ga*”):  
“15 harvesters of the sons of *Iddin-Adad*, *Awīl-ilī* received”<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The fractions recorded in the text do not usually appear in lists of numbers followed by names, in which the numbers refer to the harvesters provided by the people indicated in the second column of the text. See also the commentary to Rositani (2011), no. 79.

<sup>37</sup> Rositani (2011), no. 111:  $\lceil 10^7 \rceil + 2 \text{ lú.še.gur}_{10}.\text{ku}_5 / \lceil \text{d} \rceil \text{nin.ug-a-bi}$ . A *Nin.pirig-abī* son of *Eribam*, most likely the same person, also occurs in AOAT 25, 188-189:1 (BM 78811:1 tablet and BM 78812:1 case, p. 188 transcription, p. 189 copy) (*Hammurabi* 33); BAP 95:4; CT VI 40a:19 (*Samsu-iluna* 1); CT XLVII 75:18 (*Samsu-iluna* 7<sup>3</sup>). For more information about *Nin.pirig-abī* also see Finkelstein, RA 67 (1973: 115).

<sup>38</sup> Rositani (2011), no. 10 (Rev. 14-15): 4 (*bán*) *á.bi* 2  $\text{lú.še.gur}_{10}.\text{ku}_5 / \text{šu-mi-er-še-tim}$ , “40 šila (of barley as) pay for 2 harvesters (of) *Šumi-eršetim*”.

<sup>39</sup> The text has a parallelepiped-shape with two roughly square faces.

<sup>40</sup> Rositani (2011), no. 108: *Obv.*  $^1 10 + \lceil 5 \rceil \text{ lú.še.gur}_{10}.\text{ku}_5 / ^2 \text{ša} \text{ } ^\text{d} \text{EN.ZU-i-di-nam} / ^3 \text{ } ^\text{a-wi-il-AN/Lo.E.} \text{ } ^4 \text{ma-hi-ir}$ .

<sup>41</sup> Also the shape of this receipt is a parallelepiped with two roughly square faces.

<sup>42</sup> Rositani (2011), no. 115: *Obv.*  $^1 15 \text{ lú.še.gur}_{10}.\text{ku}_5 / ^2 \text{ša} \text{ } \text{dumu.meš} \text{ } i\text{-din-adad} / ^3 \text{ } ^\text{a-wi-il-AN} / ^4 \text{ma-hi-ir}$ .

## 5. Hierarchical reconstruction

Some dockets for harvesters also indicate different levels of responsibility. Here are some examples:

Rositani (2011), no. 84 (1st.II.Hammurabi 31):<sup>43</sup>

- |     |    |   |
|-----|----|---|
| F.a | 1. | 2 lú še.gur <sub>10</sub> .[ku <sub>5</sub> ] |
|     | 2. | a.šà ša la-ma-sí ʾlukur ʾutu <sup>44</sup>    |
|     | 3. | ʾnì.šú a-bu-um-tà-bu-<um>                     |
| F.b | 4. | ʾip-qú <sup>45</sup> -ʾnin.gal                |

“2 harvesters (in the) field of Lamassī, nadītum of Šamaš, under the control of Abum-ṭābum, Ipqu-Ningal”<sup>45</sup>

Rositani (2011), no. 85 (2nd.II.Hammurabi 31):

- |     |    |  |
|-----|----|--|
| F.a | 1. | 3 lú.še.gur <sub>10</sub> .ku <sub>5</sub> |
|     | 2. | a.šà ša la-ma-sí                           |
|     | 3. | nì.šú a-bu-ʾum <sup>46</sup> -<ṭà-bu-um>   |
| F.b | 4. | ʾip-qú-ʾša-ʾla <sup>47</sup>               |

...  
 Seal ʾip-qú<sup>47</sup>-[ʾša-la]  
 ʾir<sup>48</sup>-[ ]  
 ʾir<sup>48</sup>-ʾi-šum

“3 harvesters (in the) field of Lamassī, under the control of Abum-ṭābum, Ipqu-Šala”

“Seal: Ipqu-Šala, servant of I-... (and) servant of Išum”

Weitemeyer 1962, no. 113<sup>47</sup> (2nd.II. Hammurabi 8 or Hammurabi 31<sup>48</sup>):

<sup>43</sup> All the three dockets analyzed here are three-sided pyramids with a hole in the apex.

<sup>44</sup> The reading suggested is also based on the recurrence of a Lamassī lukur ʾutu in some texts dating back to the reign of Hammurabi: see E. Woestenburs, *Personal Names Old Babylonian Sippar*, Leiden (thesis unpublished), s.v. Lamassī, daughter of Puzur-Akšak.

<sup>45</sup> See also Rositani (2011: 166-168) commentary to the texts nos. 84, 85.

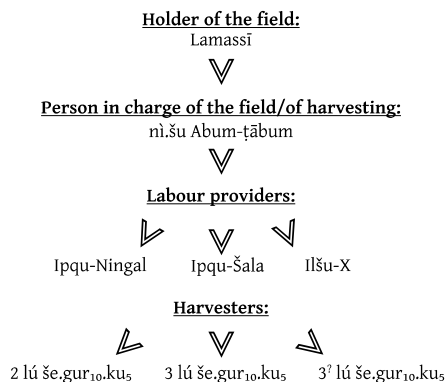
<sup>46</sup> This integration is based on the analogy with the previous docket, no. 84, and with the following one, Weitemeyer (1962), no. 113.

<sup>47</sup> For the copy, see Weitemeyer (1962: 97); for the photo see p. 137 no. 7.

3<sup>7</sup> lú.še.gur<sub>10</sub>.ku<sub>5</sub>  
a.šà ša la-ma(?) -s[í](?)  
nì.šu a-bu-um-ṭà-bu-um  
<sup>1</sup>AN-šu-<sup>d</sup>nin-X

“3(?) harvesters (in the) field of Lamassī, under the control of  
Abum-ṭābum, Ilšu-X”

In all these dockets we see that Abum-ṭābum<sup>49</sup> has the responsibility (nì.šu) over the field of Lamassī, *nadītum* of Šamaš.<sup>50</sup> His position might be similar to that of an *iššakku*; while the other men mentioned (Ipqu-Ningal and Ipqu-Šala) must be those who supplied the harvesters for the field of Lamassī, and who are therefore the ‘labour providers’. We can also suggest the integration of the verb *illik*: “has brought” (he went to... [with...]). Despite the shortness of these texts, we can distinguish four different social and economic levels:



<sup>48</sup> Given the analogy between the three dockets, it is possible to suggest a different dating for this text (Weitemeyer 1962, no. 113, which is dated 2<sup>nd</sup>/II/Hammurabi 8). We might suggest that it should be dated at the 31st year of Hammurabi, whose abbreviation is very similar to that of Hammurabi 8. See Horsnell (1999: 113-114 and 141-142).

<sup>49</sup> About an Abum-ṭābum, *rabi’nu* that occurs as a witness in Szlechter (1963: 108, 111, 113) see also Yoffee (1977: 101) with fn. 71.

<sup>50</sup> We know of more than one Lamassī, *nadītu* of Šamaš. The lack of any reference to relatives makes her identification impossible; however, she is likely to be the Lamassī daughter of Puzur-Akshak.

It is very interesting to make a comparison with another docket:

Rositani (2011), no. 116 (16th.I.Ammi-ditana 1):

- |       |    |  |
|-------|----|--|
| Obv.  | 1. | 5 lú.še.gur <sub>10</sub> .ku <sub>5</sub> .meš      |
|       | 2. | <sup>1</sup> bu-ur-ra- <sup>1</sup> tum <sup>1</sup> |
|       | 3. | ša a-na é.a-šar-rum                                  |
|       | 4. | ensí a.šà <sup>d</sup> utu                           |
| Lo.E. | 5. | il-li-ku   |

“5 harvesters (of) Burratum who went to Ea-šarrum, iššakku of the field of Šamaš”.

We can also see here a sharp distinction between the harvesters, the ‘labour provider’, Burratum, who brought the harvesters to the field of Šamaš at harvest time, and Ea-šarrum, qualified as the *iššakku* of the field of Šamaš”. This latter figure is also known from other texts.<sup>51</sup> We can define the *iššakku* as a “tenant-farmer”, or a “field administrator” responsible for the field “in charge of the actual harvesting process”, responsible for the work to be done in the field,<sup>52</sup> and most likely also responsible for paying the harvesters and maintaining the implements used during the harvest.

<sup>51</sup> See for ex. BM 80299:2, summarized in Stol (2004: 945-946). In another unpublished Sippar text from Chicago, A 1656 Rev. 4, dated to the reign of Ammi-ditana and transliterated by Stol, we find: (barley) gú.un <sup>d</sup>é.a-šar-[rum] of “the temple (house) of Šamaš”.

<sup>52</sup> Among the vast bibliography on the *iššakku* suffice to recall here some useful considerations: according to Harris (1975: 166) the *iššakku* is the steward-farmer managing the temple lands. According to Charpin (1980: 465-66) the *iššakku* has the responsibility over the growing and the farming of the *biltum*-fields, and, in his turn, he depended on the official in charge of paying the *biltum*. In the Old Babylonian period, in fact, one portion of the palace land (a.šà.gán/gú ~ *eqel biltim*) was assigned to individual tenants whose main obligation to the palace was to produce the barley for the palace itself. Whereas, the holders of other portions of arable land distributed to individuals in the form of “subsistence fields” (*šuku/šukūsum*), with a minimum size of 1 būr (6.5 ha), enough to sustain a family and a maximum of 36 ha (hectars), were obliged to render military or labor services to the palace (the so-called *ilkum*). The third category of arable land was the *eqlum ša rēš ekallim ukallu* “royal reserve land”. The palace assigned to agricultural entrepreneurs (*iššakkū*) fields of this third category not otherwise allotted, in order to produce grain for the palace. See for ex. Renger (1995: 299-300; 2002: 140-141); Charpin (2005b: 206-208).



Therefore, in all the dockets analyzed here, the person responsible for the fields is clearly identified by his personal name, *nì.šu PN*, and it is probable that he supervises the labour of hired harvest workers and is responsible for the harvest, as an *iššakku* but without this specific function.

Moreover, we can highlight a clear distinction between the last docket, in which the field of Šamaš (i.e. of the temple of Šamaš) is mentioned, and the three dockets analyzed above, in which the fields of the *nadītum* of Šamaš, Lamassī, occur. We can consider these fields as the private property of the priestess. It is known that the *nadiātum* of Šamaš occupied a very important position in Old Babylonian society:<sup>53</sup> they could sell and buy real estate (land, property, houses, slaves, cattle), gain profits and reinvest them, and lend silver at high rates of interest. Furthermore, the fact that the person responsible for the Lamassī fields, Abum-ṭābum, has been qualified as *nì.šu* rather than as *iššakku*, leads us to suggest that the fields mentioned in our dockets are not the property of the temple of Šamaš, but Lamassī's, compatibly with the role of great economic importance of *nadiātum* in the Old Babylonian period, especially in Sippar. In Sippar, in fact, where all the dockets here analysed originated, only the temples of Šamaš and Annunītum have their *iššakkū*. On the other hand, some of the wealthiest citizens, such as the *nadiātum*, possess fields that are so large that they needed to employ *iššakkū* farmers, moreover we know that one *iššakku* farmer might work for several persons at the same time.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> They usually came from the rich bourgeoisie and were the depositaries and the managers of a part of the family estate that would be kept and given back undivided to the family after their death. See Harris (1964; 1975: 305-12); Goddeeris (2002: 143-60); Charpin (2005a); Dalley *et al.* (2005: 7-8).

<sup>54</sup> For ex. in many labour loan contracts already published, especially in Finkelstein (1972), we can find the mention of some *iššakkū*: "in the field of PN<sub>1</sub>, for which PN<sub>2</sub>, the *iššakku*, is responsible".

## 6. Functions of the dockets: final considerations

In conclusion, as we have already seen, the harvest dockets, usually dating from the first two months of the year, coincide with the harvest and register the presence of the workers in the field. Therefore, the dockets are receipts for the work done on a certain day, by one or more workers, specifically—in our texts—by one harvester or by a group of them. The personal names that are found in the dockets and in the receipts surely do not refer to the harvesters. In some dockets, as we have seen, we find also the name of the people who controlled the fields and the agricultural work, and finally also the owner's name.

The dockets were used as a means of registration for the payment of the workers. They were exchanged against a wage, singularly or in small groups tied in a bunch. The names on the dockets represented the men to whom the wages were to be paid, and these men in their turn seem to be identical to the providers, rather than being the labourers themselves. So the dockets for harvest workers, issued to the head man of the group, were meant to be exchanged for wages: the people who were to receive the wages were the providers themselves, who had to redistribute the salaries to the workers. It is probable that the dockets refer only to additional or occasional workers;<sup>55</sup> they may thus be interpreted as a useful means of payment for workers hired for a few days, who are paid in a different way than the harvesters who were hired for all the harvest period.

In light of the data presented above, we can assert that the people mentioned in the dockets are labour providers engaged either by public institutions (such as the palace and temples) and private owners, such as the *nadiātum*, and high-level administrative officials. These were large landowners who needed many hired men and harvesters to work in their fields at harvest time. The balance of the economic roles between the *nadiātum* of Šamaš and the public officials changes during the Old Babylonian period in favour of the latter. This change can also be seen in the harvest

<sup>55</sup> See Weitemeyer (1962: 63, 77).

dockets, contracts and other administrative texts: in the ones from the Hammurabi period we often find the *nadiātum* of Šamaš, as we have seen before. In the later Old Babylonian harvest texts, among the people who engage labour providers we can note judges,<sup>56</sup> overseers of merchants,<sup>57</sup> a brewer,<sup>58</sup> an army scribe,<sup>59</sup> an overseer for the weavers,<sup>60</sup> barbers,<sup>61</sup> and scribes.<sup>62</sup>

During the Old Babylonian period, in fact, economic relations take tributary forms of production and royal management, and the administrative documentation describes a situation in which a large proportion of economic activity was assigned or entrusted to individuals. The dockets are an example of this situation and of the complex registration system existing in the Old Babylonian period, of which they constitute the simplest level. However, they should be read in comparison to more complex administrative texts, such as contracts and lists. On the whole, they show how well-organized the administration of the arable lands was in the first half of the second millennium B.C.

Also, thanks to the data provided by the dockets, we can make suppositions about the nature of the people mentioned in them,

<sup>56</sup> See Rositani (2011), nos. 34.BM 81182 (1st.XI.Ammi-ditana 29: Utu-šumundib); 39.BM 79890 (25th.XII.Ammi-ditana 37: Iddin-Ea); 40.BM 79897 (11th.XIIb.Ammi-ditana 37: Iddin-Ea); 42.BM 78560 (14<sup>th</sup>.XII.Ammi-šaduqa 9: Ipiq-Annunītum, see also *ibid.*, p. 119 commentary to the text); 50.BM 16539 (9th.XI.Ammi-šaduqa 13: Ipqu-Annunītum); 54.BM 16532 (10th.XII.Ammi-šaduqa 15: Ipiq-Annunītum).

<sup>57</sup> See Rositani (2011), nos. 33.BM 81494 (10<sup>th</sup>.XII.Ammi-ditana 27: Ilšu-ibnišu); 44.BM 81300 (11<sup>th</sup>.IX.Ammi-šaduqa 11: Sîn-bēl-aplim, son of Ilšu-ibni, the overseer of the merchants); 46.BM 80970 (18th.IX.Ammi-šaduqa 12: Sîn-bēl-aplim, son of Ilšu-ibni, the overseer of the merchants); 70.BM 81477 (16th.XI.Ammi-šaduqa 17<sup>th</sup>: Utu-šumundib).

<sup>58</sup> See Rositani (2011), no. 48.BM 81784 (11<sup>th</sup>.VI<sup>th</sup>.Ammi-šaduqa 13: Alilum).

<sup>59</sup> See Rositani (2011), no. 31.BM 80986 (5th.XII.Ammi-ditana 24: Marduk-muballit, the *abi šābim* official).

<sup>60</sup> See Rositani (2011), no. 38.BM 81444 (20th.XI.Ammi-ditana 37: Adad-mušallim).

<sup>61</sup> See Rositani (2011), nos. 35.BM 81445 (11th.XII.Ammi-ditana 31: Utul-Ištar); 43.BM 78562 (26th.VI.Ammi-šaduqa 11: Nanna-mansum).

<sup>62</sup> See Rositani (2011), no. 36.BM 81056 (5th.I.Ammi-ditana 32: Utul-Ištar); 52.BM 79306 (13th.XII.Ammi-šaduqa 14: Ipqu-Antum<sup>2</sup>, see also Rositani (2011), p. 131, fn. 206); 71.BM 79234 (21st.I.Samsu-ditana 2: Ibbi-Sîn).

especially the farmers. They seem to be individual contractors, entrepreneurs who are employed to bring hired workers and harvesters not only to the palace lands, but also to the lands of the temples and those of rich private people.<sup>63</sup> The same can be said, therefore, of all the entrepreneurs who took responsibility for such services, such as providing the institutions with labourers for different kinds of work and collecting the dues from agricultural production. Finally, the harvest dockets could be an attestation for additional or occasional workers, either individuals or groups; accordingly, the dockets for the latter could be issued to the head man as the provider of hired labour, while the normal process was to draw up contracts for the hiring of workers or harvesters. The dockets appear to be a useful means of paying workers who were hired on a daily basis, under conditions different from the issue of wages in the usual way.

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<sup>63</sup> See for this subject Van De Mieroop (1993: 168-169).

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# Chroniques de l'Ida-Maraş et autres pays des environs

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**Abstract.** *Two new letters coming from the Upper Country of the Kingdom of Mari and sent to its king, Zimri-Lim, are published and commented. They evoke wars which marked this region, then called Ida-Maraş. They give a glimpse of two episodes of the relations between Mari and the cities of the Northern frontier. On the one hand, two local princes are besieging the city of Ašnakkum and write a surprising letter to Zimri-Lim whom they call their brother. On the other hand, a general sent a report on a military campaign which, though victorious, testify to the precariousness of the authority of Mari on its vassals.*

La Haute Djéziré amorrite a connu de nombreuses figures intéressantes dont des petits et grands rois, des généraux, des princesses et des Bédouins. Bien des péripéties sont connues grâce aux volumineuses archives du grand palais royal de Mari. Une partie non négligeable de la documentation est inédite ou en cours d'édition. Deux nouveaux textes illustrent des moments de la guerre qui était endémique dans cette région et témoignent des mœurs politiques des anciens habitants du Haut Habur au début du règne de Zimri-Lim.

## 1. Du nouveau sur la manière dont Yaqbi-Addu, éphémère roi d'Ašnakkum, s'empara de sa capitale

J'avais signalé l'existence de la lettre M.11020 dans un article consacré au petit royaume d'Ašnakkum (FM VI, p. 120 n. 4), car elle était écrite par deux individus, Yaqbi-Addu et Hadni-turuk, dont le premier avait été un éphémère roi d'Ašnakkum. La tablette

n'était cependant pas accessible au moment de la rédaction de cet article et son contenu m'était inconnu. Il y a peu, J.-M. Durand a retrouvé, parmi les papiers de M. Birot, une transcription rapide de M.11020 (= TH72.30) avec quelques dessins au crayon à mine des passages abîmés. Cette transcription n'était évidemment que provisoire, mais elle s'avère déjà excellente en soi. Il est aujourd'hui possible de l'améliorer grâce aux dessins réalisés par M. Birot. La compréhension du document est aussi grandement facilitée par les progrès de nos connaissances historiques. Yaqbi-Addu n'a d'ailleurs été identifié qu'en 2002 dans *FM VI*. Il n'en reste pas moins qu'une collation de la tablette en Syrie devra être effectuée. Il m'a paru utile de livrer cette version telle quelle en raison de l'intérêt évident du document pour l'histoire de Mari et en particulier de l'Ida-Maraş où se trouvait Ašnakkum (= Chagar Bazar ?).

### M.11020 [d'après les notes manuscrites de M. Birot]

- [a-na zī]-[im<sup>2</sup>-ri<sup>2</sup>]-[li-im]  
 2 [qī]-bī-ma  
 [um-ma] ia-aq-bi-<sup>d</sup>iškur  
 4 [ù] ha-ad-ni-tu-ru-uk  
 [ah]-hu-ka-a-ma  
 6 aš-na-ak-ka-am<sup>ki</sup> la-wa-nu  
 [š]um<sup>2</sup>-ma at-ta tu-la-pa-at  
 8 ša-ba-am ša ki-ma tá (TA)-ra-di-[i]m  
 tú-ur ! (RA<sup>2</sup>) -da-am-ma<sup>2</sup>  
 10 [l]u<sub>2</sub> ir<sub>3</sub>-ka li-še-šú-ú  
 šum-ma la ké-em-ma  
 12 a-na e-pé-ri qa-at-ni  
 ni-iš-ta-ka-an  
 14 lu<sub>2</sub> ir<sub>3</sub>-ka i-mu-ut-tu  
 ù lu-ú ti-di ša-ni-tam  
 16 [a-h]a-at-ni i-na e<sub>2</sub>  
 [...]x-BI-AN [wa<sup>1</sup>-aš-ba-at  
 18 [...] ú-ul mi-im-[m]a [a]t-[ta]  
 [...] -ni-im ši-[i<sup>2</sup>]-ma

20 [...] x [...]  
 [...] x [...]  
 (1 ou 2 lignes perdues.)

<sup>1-5</sup> Dis à Zimrī-Lim, ainsi parlent Yaqbi-Addu et Hadnī-turuk, tes frères.

<sup>6</sup> Nous faisons le siège d'Ašnakkum. <sup>7</sup> Si tu prends du retard, <sup>8-9</sup> envoie une troupe (d'hommes) autant qu'il en faut, <sup>10</sup> afin qu'ils fassent sortir tes serviteurs. <sup>11</sup> S'il n'en est pas ainsi, <sup>12-13</sup> à peine aurons-nous commencé la (construction) d'une levée de terre, <sup>14</sup> que tes serviteurs mourront. <sup>15</sup> Te voilà averti !

Autre chose, <sup>16-17</sup> notre sœur réside dans la maison de ... bi-El. <sup>18</sup> [...] Toi en rien [...]. <sup>19-20</sup> Elle [...].

Yaqbi-Addu et Hadnī-turuk écrivent depuis la cité d'Ašnakkum en plein cœur de l'Ida-Maraş. Le premier est connu comme ayant été roi d'Ašnakkum au tout début du règne de Zimrī-Lim. Quant au second, il figure environ deux ou trois années après dans la liste des vassaux du Mari dressée par Ašmad. Le nom de la ville sur laquelle il a régné n'est pas connu<sup>1</sup>. M.11020 permet de voir qu'il est le véritable frère de Yaqbi-Addu, puisqu'ils ont une sœur en commun. En outre, Yaqbi-Addu, dont le nom figure en tête, est sans doute l'aîné.

Depuis l'article sur Ašnakkum FM VI, l'identité de Yaqbi-Addu a pu être précisée grâce à D. Lacambre et A. Millet Albà, qui ont retrouvé son nom parmi les listes administratives de Chagar Bazar datées de l'époque éponymale<sup>2</sup>. Dans le billet n°159, daté de l'éponymat de Nimer-Sîn, apparaît un *ia-aq-bi-diškur dumu e<sub>2</sub>-gal* qui reçoit une ration de bière d'excellente qualité. Le statut de *mār ekallim* correspondrait à celui d'un « fonctionnaire du palais ». Ainsi, quatre ans avant la chute du Royaume de Haute Mésopota-

<sup>1</sup> M. Guichard, « Au pays de la Dame de Nagar », *Florilegium Marianum* II, 1994, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. D. Lacambre et A. Millet Albà dans Ö. Tunca et Abd el-M. Baghdo eds., *Chagar Bazar (Syrie) III. Les trouvailles épigraphiques et sigillographiques du chantier I (2000-2002)*, 2008, p. 95, 145-147.

mie, Yaqbi-Addu était en poste à Ašnakkum. S'il s'agit bien du même personnage que l'auteur de M.11020, il doit être un membre de la noblesse d'Ašnakkum réduit à l'état de fonctionnaire sous le règne de Samsī-Addu qui profita de l'effondrement du RHM pour retrouver ses droits ancestraux. Hadnī-turuk lui-même n'apparaît pas dans cette documentation.

Si Yaqbi-Addu et Hadnī-turuk se prétendent « frères » de Zimrī-Lim, c'est qu'ils se considèrent comme ses égaux. Cela est conforme à l'étiquette qu'adopte Yaqbi-Addu dans FM VI 6 postérieure à M.11020. La situation de Yaqbi-Addu a cependant changé entretemps, car, quand il écrit FM VI 6, il est devenu le maître d'Ašnakkum (comme le suggère l. 10, où il rappelle la vieille alliance qui existait entre Mari et Ašnakkum). Une lettre inédite de Zakura-abum, chef des Bédouins venu négocier un accord auprès des villes d'Ida-Maraş, donne confirmation que Yaqbi-Addu est bien devenu le roi d'Ašnakkum<sup>3</sup>.

Pourtant, puisque M.11020 nous situe à un moment où Yaqbi-Addu n'a pas encore pris Ašnakkum, il ne devrait être pour l'heure qu'un simple chef de guerre. Mais le ton qu'il adopte indique qu'il se prévaut déjà du titre de roi d'Ašnakkum. C'est sans doute aussi le cas de son frère, qui lui aussi doit déjà se targuer du titre de roi. Leur situation était encore précaire dans cette période de troubles et de révolutions palatiales. Il n'est pas impossible qu'ils aient déjà eu un contact avec Zimrī-Lim avant qu'il ne s'empare de Mari et qu'ils se soient alliés avec lui à des conditions avantageuses pour eux.

Mais s'ils se revendiquent du même rang que Zimrī-Lim, leur demande de troupes révèle qu'ils ont peut-être plus besoin du nouveau roi de Mari que lui d'eux. Au moment où ils mènent le siège d'Ašnakkum, aucune armée de Mari n'est encore montée en Ida-Maraş et la situation échappe localement au contrôle de Zimrī-Lim, faisant croire aux princes de l'Ida-Maraş qu'ils vont pouvoir redevenir les maîtres chez eux.

La ville d'Ašnakkum devait être tenue par un ancien administrateur du Royaume de Samsī-Addu qui gardait la ville pour son

<sup>3</sup> Inédit M.9093 (*Nahur et l'Ida-Maraş. La correspondance d'Itūr-Asdū gouverneur de Nahur sous le règne de Zimrī-Lim et autres documents*, en préparation).

propre compte ou celui d'Išme-Dagan. Elle n'a pas dû tarder à tomber, même sans l'aide de Mari, comme le suggère FM VI 6 et le rapport inédit de Zakura-abum<sup>4</sup>. Le style direct du message de Ya-qbi-Addu et Hadnī-turuk suggère que le prestige de Zimrī-Lim, malgré sa conquête de Mari, n'était pas encore établi.

Mari venait à peine de tomber et la conquête du royaume n'était peut-être pas encore achevée. L'affaire de la sœur de Ya-qbi-Addu et Hadnī-turuk, bien qu'en l'état en partie seulement compréhensible, doit être mise en relation avec une lettre du même Zakura-abum qui traite d'un sujet analogue<sup>5</sup>, typique d'une période troublée où les camps rivaux ou non procédaient à l'échange des transfuges.

La femme réclamée se trouvait dans la « maison de ...BI-El ». La fin de ce nom laisse place à plusieurs restitutions possibles. En premier lieu, il pourrait s'agir du temple d'Aštābi-El, en tenant compte des traces du signe avant BI qu'a dessiné M. Birot, [dāš-t]a-bi-AN dans ses notes. Le culte d'Aštābi-El, connu déjà à Ebla présargonique, se trouvait, d'après les archives de Mari, dans une petite localité du district de Saggaratum, Ziniyan<sup>6</sup>. Cette femme pourrait s'être trouvée prise au piège alors qu'elle rendait visite au dieu de l'incubation, à moins qu'elle fût simplement vouée au dieu par Samsī-Addu, sort fréquent pour les prisonniers de guerre. Cette hypothèse a l'avantage d'expliquer pourquoi les auteurs de la lettre ne précisent pas la ville où est sensée être la femme. Une autre solution consisterait à restituer le nom d'un individu que Yaqbi-Addu et Hadni-turuk supposent connu de Zimrī-Lim. Il pourrait s'agir de [i-ba-a]l ?-pī-El. Toutefois le signe [A]L ne s'impose pas, si l'on en croit l'autographie de Birot. J.-M. Durand suggère de restituer [i'a-a]r-bi-AN. La question reste ouverte.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. note ci-dessus.

<sup>5</sup> (Avec N. Ziegler) « Yanûh-samar et les Ekallatéens en détresse », J. Dercksen éd., *Assyria and Beyond (Studies presented to Mogens Trolle Møller)* (Mélanges Larsen), *PIHANS* 100, Leiden, 2004, p. 229-247.

<sup>6</sup> J.-M. Durand, *Mythologie et Religion des Sémites Occidentaux*, Vol. I : Ébla, Mari, *OLA* 162, p. 274 et *OBO* 265, p. 15.

La nouvelle lettre de Yaqbi-Addu montre clairement qu'il avait quitté Chagar Bazar (peut-être Ašnakkum) et rassemblé un contingent pour s'emparer d'Ašnakkum à un moment où beaucoup de princes deshérités pouvaient tenter ce genre d'aventure. Il se peut d'ailleurs qu'une des conditions de sa réussite est qu'il ait su avec son frère rallier les environs de la capitale, devenue désormais l'ultime refuge d'une poignée de partisans d'Išme-Dagan. Comme Yaqbi-Addu et son frère l'indiquent, dans la ville se trouvaient des serviteurs de Zimrī-Lim. Ils font référence à des déportés mariotes (*nasīhum*) dont le sort ne sera réglé qu'ultérieurement, sans doute par la diplomatie de Zakura-abum. Ils sont menacés de mort si Zimrī-Lim n'envoie pas un secours. Est-ce parce qu'ils étaient forcés de participer à la défense de la ville et que les assiégeants s'estimaient incapables de les protéger ? Prévoient-ils un massacre aveugle une fois la ville tombée ? Le ton de Yaqbi-Addu et Hadnī-turuk, qui peut paraître avec le recul insolent, trahit surtout une conception des relations entre rois fondée sur la « fraternité » propre à l'Ida-Maraş. Ce malentendu allait vite être dissipé par une expédition musclée de Zimrī-Lim en l'an 1 (campagne contre Kahat).

## 2. La restauration de Hāya-Sūmu et la prise de Tādum

Le second document A.2047 nous transporte cinq ans plus tard, dans la partie orientale du Triangle du Habur. Yaqbi-Addu a été remplacé par Sammêtar, peut-être présent dans l'armée de l'Ida-Maraş, qui combat aux côtés de Yassi-Dagan, l'auteur de la lettre. L'autorité de Mari est désormais reconnue tout en étant fortement contestée dans les moments difficiles tels que celui décrit par Yassi-Dagan. L'occupation d'une partie de l'Ida-Maraş par l'armée d'Ešnunna, avec qui Mari est en mauvais termes sinon en guerre, a fait vaciller les alliés de Mari. Les querelles internes divisent encore plus la région, notamment à cause de la rivalité entre Kurda et Andarig qui rejaillit sur la vie des populations du Haut Habur qui ont tissé de nombreux liens avec les habitants de ces pays. Yassi-Dagan décrit le tournant d'une guerre encore mal

connue. L'intérêt de son témoignage est renforcé par la qualité de conservation du document, presque intact<sup>7</sup>.

### A.2047

- a-na be-lí-ia*  
 2 *qí-bí-ma*  
*um-ma ia-ás-si-<sup>d</sup>da-gan*  
 4 *ir<sub>3</sub>-ka-a-ma*  
*i-da-ma-ra-aş ka-lu-şu pa-hi-ir*  
 6 *ù şa-pa-as-su ib-ba-al-ki-it*  
*um-ma-a-mi zi-im-ri-li-im a-na be-lí-né*  
 8 *ni-iş-ba-at-ma it-ti sa-li-ma-ti-ia*  
*sa-li-im ù it-ti ni-ku-ur-ti-ia*  
 10 *sa-li-im-ma mi-im-ma sa-li-[im-ta-ş]u*  
*ù ni-ku-ur-ta-şu şa zi-im-ri-[li-im]*  
 12 *be-lí-ni ú-ul ni-mu-u[r]*  
*i-da-ma-ra-aş ip-hu-ur-ma an-né-t[im]*  
 14 *ù ma-da-tim-ma id-bu-b[u o ?]*  
*ù şa-pa-as-sú-nu na-ba-al-ku-[ta-at]*  
 T.16 <sup>[1]</sup>*ha-ia-sú-mu-ú i-na pu-<sup>[1]</sup>hu-ur<sup>1</sup>*  
*i-da-ma-<ra>-aş ka-li-şu*  
 18 *it-bé-em-ma ki-a-am id-bu-ba-am*  
*[u]m-ma-a-mi a-na zi-im-ri-li-im*  
 R 20 *[a]t-ka-al-ma a-na ma-am-ma-an*  
*ú-ul at-ka-al ul-la-nu-um zi-im-ri-li-im*  
 22 *a-ba-am ù mu-şe-zi-ba-am şa-né-e-em ú-ul i-<sup>[1]</sup>şu<sup>1</sup>*  
*i-na-an-na ma-am-ma-an şa ú-şe-zi-ba-an-ni*  
 24 *ú-ul ib-ba-şí an-né-tim ù ma-da-tim-ma*  
<sup>1</sup>*ha-ia-sú-mu-ú id-bu-ba-am*  
 26 *a-na-ku [k]i-a-am a-pu-ul-şu um-ma a-na-ku-ma a-na a-[lim]*  
*diğir<sup>la</sup>-şú-ra-a<sup>ki</sup> ma-an-nu-um ú-te-er-ka ù i-na-an-[na]*  
 28 <sup>1</sup>*qar-ni-li-im ù ha-na<sup>meş</sup> i-na qí-bi-it ma-an-nim a-na til-[la-ti-ka]*  
*il-l[i-k]u-nim ú-ul i-na qí-bi-it be-lí-ia zi-im-ri-li-i[m]*

<sup>7</sup> La copie a été réalisée d'après l'original, quand la tablette était encore conservée rue de la Perle, dans le Marais, à Paris.



- 30 i[l-li-ku]-ni-kum an-né-e-tim ù ma-da-tim-ma a-ta-ap-pa-al-š[u]  
i-na-[an]-na u<sub>4</sub>-<um> ṭup-pí an-né-e-em a-na še-er be-lí-ia
- 32 ú-[š]a-bi-lam a-lam ta-a-da<sup>ki</sup> ša lu<sub>2</sub> eš<sub>3</sub>-nun-na<sup>ki</sup>  
a-na ka-ra-ši-šu ú-dan-ni-nu<sup>8</sup>-šu qar-ni-li-im
- 34 iṣ-ba-as-sú i-na li-ib-bi-šu ṣa-bu-um wa-ši-ib  
ṭup-pí an-né-em {ṛ ŠA<sup>7</sup>ṛ} i-na ta-a-da<sup>ki</sup> a-na še-er be-lí-ia
- 36 ṛ úṛ-[š]a-ṛ biṛ-lam <sup>ḡis</sup>di-im-tam ù ki-is-ki-sà-a-am  
[a-na ha]-zi-ka-nim<sup>ki</sup> qar-ni-li-im ú-ṭà-ah-ha
- T. 38 ni-i-n[u] it-ti 3 me ha-na<sup>meš</sup> ša še-em a-na ha-ší-ra-ti  
i-za-ab-b[a-l]u wa-aš-ba-nu ṣa-bu-um<sup>1</sup> šu-ú
- 40 i-ir-ru-ub ù uṣ-ší i-na-an-na ar-[hi]/-iṣ  
be-lí a-la-kam li-ṛ pu-ša<sup>ṛ</sup>-am
- C.i 42 ak-ki-ma la-ma qar-ni-li-im  
a-la-ne-e an-nu-ut-tim il-qú-ú
- 44 [b]e-lí li-ik-šu-dam šum-ma la ki-a-/am-ma  
be-lí ú-ul i-la-kam
- ii 46 an-ni-tam la an-ni-tam be-lí li-iš-pu-ra-a[m]  
ma-li be-lí i-ša-ap-pa-ra-am lu-pu-úš
- 48 ša ir<sub>3</sub>-du-ti-ia a-na še-er be-lí-ia  
áš-tap-ra-am be-lí ša lugal-ti-šu li-pu-ú[š]

<sup>1-4</sup> Dis à mon Seigneur, ainsi parle Yassi-Dagan, ton serviteur.

<sup>5</sup> Tout l'Ida-Maraš s'est réuni. <sup>6</sup> Mais leurs discours sont devenus séditieux : <sup>7-8</sup> « Nous avons pris Zimrī-Lim pour (être) notre Seigneur, <sup>8-9</sup> or il est en paix avec celui avec qui j'ai un pacte, <sup>9-10</sup> tout en étant en paix avec celui qui me fait la guerre : <sup>10-12</sup> nous n'avons nullement vu celui qui a un pacte ou qui fait la guerre avec lui, Zimrī-Lim notre seigneur. » <sup>13-14</sup> L'Ida-Maraš s'étant réuni a dit ces choses entre nombreuses autres choses <sup>15</sup> et leurs discours sont séditieux. <sup>16</sup> Hāya-Sūmu dans l'assemblée <sup>17</sup> de tout l'Ida-Maraš <sup>18</sup> s'est « levé » et m'a parlé ainsi <sup>19-20</sup> : « Je devrais avoir confiance en Zimrī-Lim, <sup>20-21</sup> pourtant je ne peux avoir confiance en personne. <sup>21-22</sup> En dehors de Zimrī-Lim, je n'ai pas d'autre père et sauveur : <sup>23-24</sup> (pourtant) actuellement il

<sup>8</sup> Sur signe effacé.

ne se trouve personne qui puisse me sauver. » De cela entre autres <sup>25</sup> Hāya-Sūmu m'a parlé. <sup>26</sup> Je lui ai répondu ainsi pour ma part : <sup>26-27</sup> « Qui t'a fait revenir dans la ville d'Ilān-ṣurā ? <sup>27-30</sup> Dans le cas présent, Qarnī-Lim et les Bédouins sont venus à ton aide sur l'ordre de qui ? <sup>29-30</sup> N'est-ce pas sur l'ordre de Zimrī-Lim qu'ils sont venus pour toi ? » <sup>30</sup> Voilà ce qu'entre autres choses je n'ai eu de cesse de lui répondre.

<sup>31-32</sup> À présent, le jour où j'ai fait porter cette tablette (écrite) par moi chez mon seigneur Qarnī-Lim s'est emparé de la ville de Tāda que l'Ešnunéen avait fortifié pour (en faire) son camp. <sup>34</sup> La troupe occupe l'intérieur. <sup>35-36</sup> J'ai fait porter cette tablette (écrite) par moi chez mon Seigneur de Tāda. <sup>36-37</sup> Qarnī-Lim va approcher la tour d'assaut et le *kiskisûm* de Hazzikkanum. <sup>38</sup> Nous sommes immobilisés à cause (lit. : avec) des 300 Bédouins qui doivent emporter le grain pour les « enclos ». <sup>39-40</sup> Cette troupe fait des va-et-viens<sup>9</sup>. <sup>40-41</sup> À présent que mon Seigneur fasse la route rapidement <sup>42-44</sup> de telle sorte que mon Seigneur arrive avant que Qarnī-Lim n'ait pris ces villes. <sup>44</sup> Sinon, si <sup>45</sup> mon seigneur ne vient pas <sup>46</sup> que mon Seigneur m'écrive dans un sens ou dans l'autre. <sup>47</sup> Je ferai tout ce que mon seigneur me commandera. <sup>48-49</sup> Je viens d'écrire chez mon Seigneur en ma qualité de serviteur. Que mon seigneur agisse en sa qualité de roi.

**l. 6 :** on trouve ce type d'expression (cf. aussi la l. 15) chez Yassi-Dagan (A.1025 [LAPO 17 545]) : 4-5 et 10 ; cf. J.-R. Kupper, « Une lettre du général Yassi-Dagan », *MARI* 6, 1990, p. 337-347 : le contexte est d'ailleurs similaire à celui de A.2047 : l'absence du roi de Mari entraîne de la part de ses alliés un fort mécontentement.

**l. 27 :** cette graphie n'est pas recensée dans MTT 1/1, p. 162-163.

**l. 32-33 :** ce passage rappelle directement ARM 28 134 de Yumraş-El roi d'Abī-ilī (royaume d'Isqa et Qa) ; cf. ci-dessous.

<sup>9</sup> Litt. « entre et sort ».

**l. 36 :** pour cet instrument de siège, cf. ARM XXVI/2 430 : 5 (<sup>giš</sup>ki-is-ki-sà-am) ; F. Joannès, ARM XXVI/1, p. 331 note b. Il s'agit sans doute d'une forme de bélier.

**l. 39 :** pour ce passage cf. ARM XIV 120 [LAPO 16 367] : 13-16 commenté ci-dessous.

## Contexte et événements

Yassi-Dagan est un serviteur de Zimrī-Lim dont la correspondance montre qu'il est un de ses principaux chefs militaires au début de son règne. Ses lettres, dont la plus célèbre est A.1025<sup>10</sup>, traitent souvent de ses missions pendant les « guerres » avec les Benjaminites et Ešnunna. Dans A.2047, il accompagne avec une troupe de Bédouins composée de 300 hommes (l. 38) Qarnī-Lim, le roi d'Andarig.

La lettre est écrite depuis la cité de Tādum (= Tâda), peu après qu'elle a été reprise aux Ešnunéens qui s'étaient enfermés dedans. Ils avaient étendu leur influence sur la partie orientale du Triangle du Habur. Le texte reste toutefois très vague sur la nature exacte de leur armée ainsi que sur la réalité des rapports de force. Il nous apprend du moins qu'Ilān-šūrā et Hazzikkanum sont tombées également sous leur coupe ou celle de leurs alliés locaux.

Il s'avère, en effet, que Hāya-Sūmu, le principal roi de l'Ida-Maraš, a été chassé un moment de sa ville d'Ilān-šūrā. Quand A.2047 est rédigée, elle a été reprise, tandis que Hazzikkanum est sur le point de subir un assaut. L'information principale de la lettre est donc l'annonce de la prise de Tādum, entre Ilān-šūrā et Hazzikkanum.

Trois informations sont déterminantes pour dater la lettre et les événements rapportés :

<sup>10</sup> Pour d'autres lettres, cf. N. Ziegler et D. Charpin, *FM V*, p. 198 n. 241 : TH 72.26. La lettre A.1215 : D. Charpin et J.-M. Durand, « Prétendants au trône dans le Proche-Orient amorrite », dans J. G. Dercksen éd., *Assyria and Beyond. Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen* (PIHANS 100), 2004, p. 99-115.

1. La mention d'Ešnunna et de sa défaite à Tâdum constitue un indice pour dater *a priori* la lettre de la fin de l'année ZL 4, qui fut marquée par le repli d'Ešnunna<sup>11</sup>. Toutefois cette retraite fut seulement partielle<sup>12</sup> et la venue ultérieure de troupes d'Ešnunna n'est pas exclue<sup>13</sup>, quoi qu'il soit encore difficile de démêler tous les événements contenus dans une documentation en désordre, fragmentaire et le plus souvent dépourvue de date.

2. La présence de Qarnī-Lim, encore allié officiel d'Ešnunna à la fin ZL 4<sup>14</sup>, et son rôle actif dans la campagne militaire conjointement avec « tout l'Ida-Maraş », et en particulier son alliance avec Hāya-Sūmu, constituent des indices chronologiques. S'il s'est réconcilié avec Zimrī-Lim à la fin de l'année ZL 4 (d'après FM V), leur alliance devient surtout évidente l'année suivante comme le montrent ARM XXXI 73 [XXV 115] du 3/vii/ZL 5 ou, pour l'année ZL 6, ARM XXIII 572 rédigé à Andarig (24/iv/ZL 6) : Qarnī-Lim, Hāya-Sūmu et Šubram de Susā sont ensemble.

3. La restauration de Hāya-Sūmu sur son trône, qui est évoquée très brièvement dans A.2047, est le sujet d'un petit groupe de lettres de Yassi-Dagan<sup>15</sup>. Hāya-Sūmu, dans des circonstances encore peu claires et à une date qu'il conviendrait de préciser, a été chassé d'Ilān-šūrā et s'est réfugié un moment à Nahur. Son retour n'a été permis que par l'aide de Qarnī-Lim, ce que Yassi-Dagan rappelle dans A.2047. Le projet concernant Hāya-Sūmu a été conçu au moment où Qarnī-Lim préparait l'installation de Hāya-Abum à Šubat-Enlil. Ce dernier projet a été effectivement réalisé au mois vii/ZL 5 comme nous l'apprennent deux documents comptables de Mari<sup>16</sup>. Qarnī-Lim et Yassi-Dagan s'entendent sur le fait que, pour une question de préséance, Hāya-Sūmu devrait avoir la priorité sur Hāya-abum. Par conséquent, le

<sup>11</sup> Cf. la reconstitution historique de D. Charpin et N. Ziegler, FM V, p. 194-205.

<sup>12</sup> Comme le relèvent D. Charpin et N. Ziegler, FM V, p. 200 : « Les Ešnunéens quittèrent Šubat-Enlil, où ils laissèrent plusieurs milliers d'hommes sous la responsabilité de Yanuh-samar (...). »

<sup>13</sup> Cf. D. Sévalié, NABU 2006/95.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. A.2821 (cf. FM V, p. 200 notamment n. 259).

<sup>15</sup> Inédit A.3691, cf. ci-dessous.

<sup>16</sup> ARM XXXI 73 et n° 76.

retour de Hāya-Sūmu dans sa ville doit avoir été antérieur au mois VII/ZL 5. Or, le document administratif M.18473 [ARM XXV 218] daté du 8/V/ZL 5<sup>17</sup> permet de préciser la date probable à laquelle Hāya-Sūmu a pu effectivement revenir : les ateliers de Mari lui fabriquent tout spécialement un trône serti d'or. L'occasion pour ce présent luxueux et hautement symbolique semble évidente si on la relie à la documentation épistolaire qui vient d'être évoquée. A.2047 doit être postérieure au début du mois v/ZL 5.

Le rapport de Yassi-Dagan évoque ainsi trois moments d'une campagne contre les Ešnunnéens et leurs alliés (sans doute à cette date Būnu-Eštar, le roi de Kurda et rival notoire de Qarnī-Lim, et une poignée de princes ralliés à sa cause) : une assemblée à Ilān-šūrā d'au moins toute l'armée dirigée par Qarnī-Lim accompagnée de Yassi-Dagan ; la prise de Tādum et son pillage puis les débuts du siège de la ville de Hazzikkanum.

### **La restauration de Hāya-Sūmu et l'assemblée générale d'Ilān-šūrā**

Le premier événement rapporté par Yassi-Dagan, qui occupe d'ailleurs plus de la moitié de sa lettre (l. 5-30), se laisse reconstruire à partir des informations qu'il délaye dans le désordre. Il est certain que ce message fut précédé d'un autre évoquant l'arrivée de l'armée à Ilān-šūrā, ce qui dispense visiblement son auteur de préciser dans A.2047 le lieu de la réunion dont il parle.

Qarnī-Lim et les Bédouins ont permis à Hāya-Sūmu de revenir à Ilān-šūrā (l. 26-30). C'est un événement politique important pour l'Ida-Maraš, car Hāya-Sūmu est alors le principal cacique régional. Son autorité sur les autres rois du pays semble avoir été plus morale que politique, mais la cause même de son prestige reste inconnue, car il ne paraît pas s'appuyer sur Ilān-šūrā, dont l'existence n'apparaît pratiquement que sous le règne de Zimrī-Lim alors qu'elle est voisine de villes plus anciennes comme Kahat ou Tādum. Hāya-Sūmu appartient à ce petit groupe de rois privilégiés qui ont le statut de « fils » de Zimrī-Lim (l. 21-22) et en

<sup>17</sup> Cf. aussi le parallèle ARM XXII 203.

outre, il est, c'est bien connu, marié à deux princesses mariotes, ce qui démontre qu'il est pour Zimrī-Lim un allié stratégique. La montée d'Ešnunna dans le Triangle du Habur a cependant sapé en partie l'autorité de Mari. Hāya-Sūmu se voit contraint d'abandonner sa ville pour s'exiler probablement à Nahur, qu'il a prise avec l'aide des Bédouins. Son retour n'est rendu possible que par une reprise en main de la région par les Mariotes ou leurs alliés. Celle-ci n'a été de fait réalisée que grâce à un monarque du Sud-Sinjar. Les années ZL 4-5 ont été marquées par un intense effort diplomatique et militaire de la part de Mari visant cette région, elle-même morcelée et sujette à des querelles qui ont provoqué des troubles dans l'Ida-Maraş. Le retour de Qarnī-Lim, roi d'Andarig, dans l'alliance mariote est particulièrement décisif, comme cela apparaît dans A.2047. Pour sa part, Qarnī-Lim cherche à reprendre en main pour son compte l'est du Triangle du Habur et le pays d'Apum, dont il est aussi le suzerain. Si le témoignage de Yassi-Dagan met en évidence son rôle dans la restitution d'Ilān-šūrā à Hāya-Sūmu, il tient cependant à en porter le crédit d'abord à la politique de Zimrī-Lim. Or c'est effectivement ce représentant qui a poussé Qarnī-Lim à se réconcilier avec Hāya-Sūmu, comme le montre un fragment de lettre qu'on peut lui attribuer<sup>18</sup> :

(...) Au sujet de l'affaire de Hāya-Sūmu(u), je me suis entretenu avec Qarnī-Lim ainsi : « Que mon seigneur “touche sa gorge” pour Hāya-Sūmu(u) ! Libère la ville d'Ilān-šūrā et [consacre]-le<sup>19</sup> à l'intérieur de [sa] ville ! (...) »

La reprise en main d'Ilān-šūrā donne lieu à un grand rassemblement : selon les termes de Yassi-Dagan « tout l'Ida-Maraş » s'y est donné rendez-vous. L'expression<sup>20</sup> pourrait être une exagération volontaire de l'auteur, qui veut rendre compte efficacement du

<sup>18</sup> Inédit A.3691 : 12'-18' : *aš-šum ʔe<sub>4</sub>-em ha-ià-sú-ú-um, ke-em a-na qar-ni-li-im aš-ba-[at], um-ma a-na-ku-ma be-lí na-pí-iš-ta-[šu], a-na ha-ià-sú-ú-um li-il-pu-ut, ʔa<sup>1</sup>-lam i-la-an-šú-ra-a<sup>ki</sup>, wa-aš-ši-ir à i-na li-bi a-l[i-šu], [ku-d]u<sup>2</sup>-šu. (...) »*

<sup>19</sup> Il s'agit d'une référence au rituel de protection de la *kidûtum*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ida-Maraş kalušu* n'est pas rare, si l'on tient compte des variantes.

mécontentement du pays à l'égard de son seigneur. Lui-même regrette visiblement que le roi ne se dépêche pas de monter alors que Qarnī-Lim lui vole la vedette. L'assemblée comporte d'abord des rois qui participent à la campagne de Qarnī-Lim. En tête de file se trouve Hāya-Sūmu. Mais si l'on prend la description de Yassi-Dagan au pied de la lettre, ce qui est tout à fait recevable d'après ce que l'on sait des institutions régionales, elle se compose aussi des chefs de villes (*sugāgum*) et les principales autorités du pays voire du peuple (*muškēnum*), autrement dit elle peut revêtir un caractère beaucoup plus politique que militaire. Cela dit, cette assemblée ne peut sûrement pas être aussi complète que ne le prétend A.2047, car, indépendamment du problème de la définition de l'Ida-Maraš et de ses membres, certaines cités sont à l'évidence exclues, comme Tādum et Hazzikkanum, qui ne sont pas encore reconquises au moment où le Mariote est à Ilān-sūrā.

Le retour de Hāya-Sūmu dans sa ville, qui a donné lieu à cette concertation générale, n'a curieusement pas apaisé les gens de l'Ida-Maraš. Si, d'un côté, l'assemblée reconnaît encore Zimrī-Lim comme son seigneur, on lui reproche ses alliances qui ne correspondraient pas avec celles de l'Ida-Maraš. Si le pays de l'Ida-Maraš s'est soumis à l'autorité de Mari après l'époque où Yaqbi-Addu et plusieurs de ses homologues croyaient pouvoir établir une alliance paritaire, le pays n'est pourtant pas docile et se donne le droit de réclamer des comptes suivant ses coutumes parlementaires. Or, la politique extérieure de Zimrī-Lim est incomprise localement. Vu le laconisme de la tablette, on ne sait s'il est question d'alliances locales ou tribales qui choqueraient — Zimrī-Lim serait accusé d'avoir des ententes avec leurs ennemis locaux — ou s'il est question de son attitude vis-à-vis d'Ešnunna. Les rois sont sûrement au courant que des tractations ont lieu avec Ibāl-pi-El II. La documentation administrative du palais de Mari témoigne en effet d'un rapprochement concret entre Mari et Ešnunna à la fin de ZL 5, sans compter l'apaisement du conflit avec les Benjaminites.

Cette question du double jeu du roi de Mari en pose d'ailleurs une autre : Zimrī-Lim est-il un bon suzerain ? Cette fonction est définie dans A.2047 par deux notions complémentaires : seigneur (*bēlum*)/père (*abum*) et sauveur (*mušēzibum*). Il n'a pas empêché

les ennuis de Hāya-Sūmu et ce n'est pas lui non plus qui l'a replacé sur son trône personnellement. Yassi-Dagan, dans la présentation dramatique qu'il donne de cette assemblée, fait parler en dernier Hāya-Sūmu parce que son avis prévalait sûrement. Or, ce roi ne cherche en rien à calmer la colère des participants. Ne parlant que de son cas, mais en s'exprimant de manière stéréotypée de telle sorte que les autres rois peuvent s'identifier facilement à son discours, il souligne ironiquement la faiblesse de la suzeraineté de Zimrī-Lim en formulant des paradoxes. Cela prouve que l'aide de Qarnī-Lim ou la présence de Yassi-Dagan sont jugées insuffisantes. Seule la venue de Zimrī-Lim et de son armée pourrait peut-être changer l'impression négative que lui fait alors cette piètre autorité mariote. Le prestige du roi de Mari est gravement compromis.

En bref, l'alliance avec Mari n'offre pas les garanties escomptées ni en matière de sécurité, ni en matière de fidélité ou de loyauté. Toutefois Zimrī-Lim trouve en Qarnī-Lim un soutien de poids qui lui permet de bouter hors du Haut Habur les Ešnunéens et leurs partisans, ainsi que de maintenir son système de vassalité dans la région tant bien que mal. Nahur devenue vacante après le départ de Hāya-Sūmu, il en profitera pour y installer en ZL 6 une garnison mariote permanente, renforçant son dispositif de contrôle.

### **La prise de Tādum et le début du siège de Hazzikkanum**

D'Ilān-šūrā, où a lieu ce parlement peu favorable au roi de Mari, l'armée des coalisés part assiéger Tādum dont la proximité est notamment suggérée par le billet administratif ARM XXI 3 [FM X 58]<sup>21</sup> du 4/v/ZL 12, enregistrant des apports réalisés successivement à Ilān-šūrā et à Tādum<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Cette relation apparaît aussi dans ARM XXI 150, quoique moins clairement. Cf. la succession dans ARM XXII 15, col. II : « (...) homme d'Ilān-šūrā, homme de Bidaršum, homme de Tādum ». Bidaršum (= lu<sub>2</sub> *bi-dar\*-šum*) est une cité de l'Ida-



La ville a été fortifiée par les Ešnunnéens pour en faire un camp (l. 32-33). L'entrée de cette armée est peut-être évoquée par Yumraş-El dans sa lettre au roi ARM XXVIII 134<sup>23</sup> :

« Depuis 3 jours, l'Ešnunnéen se trouve à Tâdum et il fortifie la ville. Jusqu'à Nilibšinum, il a lancé un coup de main. »

Yassi-Dagan, bien que chef de l'armée « mariote », un contingent réduit de Bédouins, ne joue pas le premier rôle, ce dont il se plaint. L'offensive est en effet menée par un autre roi, Qarnī-Lim. La participation active de l'armée de l'Ida-Maraş à la prise de Tâdum peut se déduire non seulement de la lettre mais est confirmée par ARM XIV 120 [LAPO 16 367] (cf. ci-dessous). Quant au contingent de Yassi-Dagan, il était à l'évidence trop insuffisant et indiscipliné pour avoir eu un rôle déterminant, même si la convoitise de Tâdum et de des réserves constituées par la troupe ešnunnéenne avait dû redoubler l'énergie des Bédouins lors de l'attaque de la ville.

L'étape suivante était Hazzikkanum, voisine de Tâdum. Le sort de cette ville dans cette période est mieux connu que celui de Tâdum en raison des vicissitudes de son roi Huziru, relatées par plusieurs lettres étudiées dans FM II<sup>24</sup>. Comme Hāya-Sūmu, il fut chassé de sa ville. On sait que son ennemi personnel était Akin-amar, un partisan de Bunu-Eštar.

Quoi qu'il en soit, Yassi-Dagan, au moment où se prépare le siège de Hazzikkanum, est contraint momentanément à l'inaction à Tâdum car ses propres troupes préfèrent se livrer au pillage de

Maraş attestée à l'époque paléo-akkadienne (à Tell Brak) et dans la correspondance inédite d'Itūr-Asdu, gouverneur de Nahur.

<sup>22</sup> Le contenu du billet est repris dans le récapitulatif ARM XXIV 32. On relèvera que la lecture de M. Birot du texte très fragmentaire ARM XXVII 95 non seulement paraît très plausible, mais conviendrait parfaitement à la situation décrite dans A.2047.

<sup>23</sup> (Traduction J.-R. Kupper) *iš-tu 3 u<sub>4</sub>° lu<sub>2</sub> eš<sub>3</sub>-nun-na-a<sup>ki</sup>, i-na ta-a-di-im<sup>ki</sup> wa-ši-ib, [ù] a-lam ú-da-an-na-an, [ù a-d]i ni-li-ib-ši-ni-im<sup>ki</sup>, [sa-ad-d]a-am ú-wa-aš-še-er-ma [...].* D. Charpin et N. Ziegler datent la lettre de ZL 3, cf. FM V, p. 199 n. 247. L'histoire a pu se répéter.

<sup>24</sup> « Au pays de la Dame de Nagar », FM II (N.A.B.U. 3), 1994, p. 235-272.

la ville. Il assiste résigné au ballet incessant des Bédouins-Hana transportant leurs prises dans leurs campements, dénommés « enclos » (*hašīrātum*), où se trouvaient leurs familles et leurs troupeaux. Ceux-ci doivent avoir été situés en sécurité en aval sur le Habur, peut-être aux alentours de Ṭabatūm. Un écho de cette histoire est donné par le témoignage d'un messenger de Hāya-Sūmu que transmet Yaqqim-Addu, le gouverneur de Saggaratum à Zimrī-Lim (ARM XIV 120 [LAPO 16 367] : 13-16)<sup>25</sup> :

« (Tandis que) Hāya-Sūmu assiège Hazzikkanum, les Bédouins ont emporté le grain de Tādum. »

L'absence de Qarnī-Lim dans cette version est intrigante<sup>26</sup>, mais il y a peu de doute qu'il soit question du même sujet que A.2047<sup>27</sup>. Aucun des deux témoins n'émet de jugement sur le comportement des Bédouins. Mais le fait de le mentionner semble être une façon de le désapprouver.

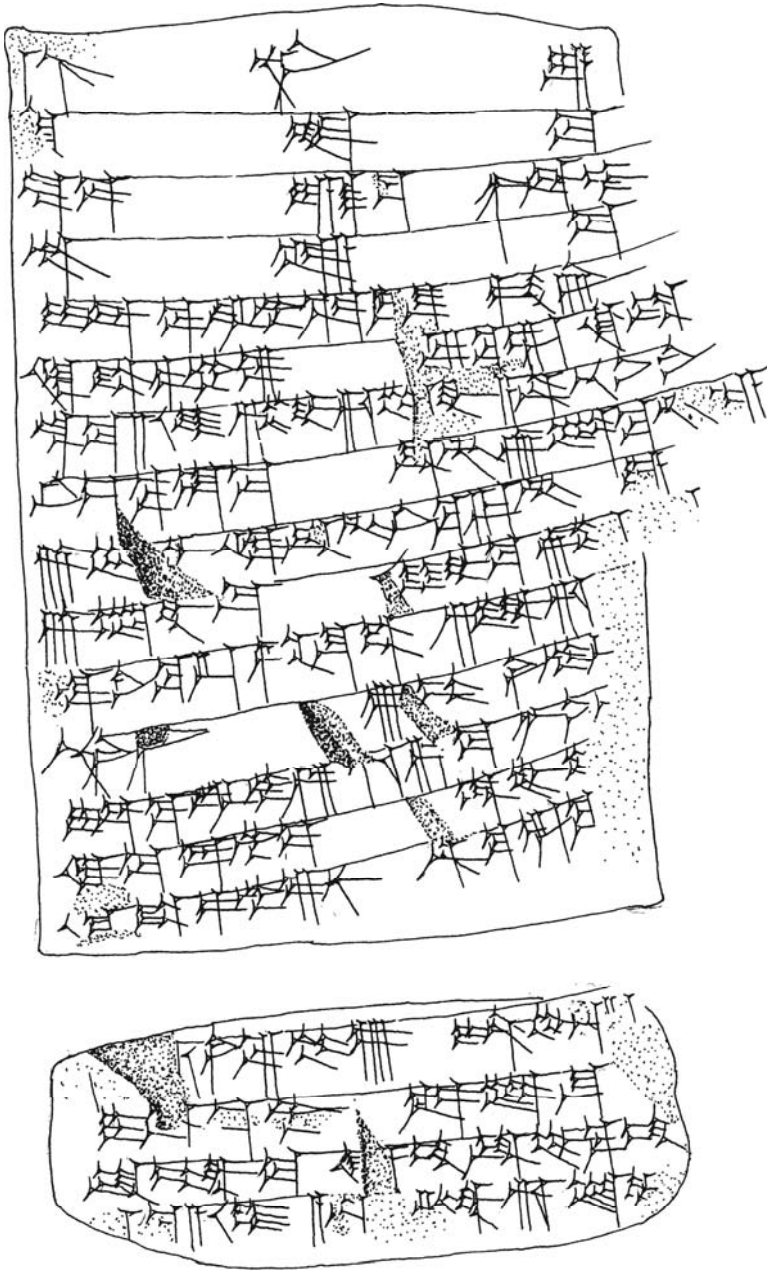
<sup>25</sup> *ha-ià-su-mu-ú, ha-az-za-ka-an-nam<sup>ki</sup> la-wi, ù še ša ta-a-da<sup>ki</sup> lu<sub>2</sub>ha-na<sup>meš</sup>, i-za-ab-bi-il.*

<sup>26</sup> Il se peut que le messenger exprime le point de vue de son seigneur et passe volontairement sous silence le rôle du roi d'Andarig, allié et concurrent.

<sup>27</sup> Cependant il est difficile d'en tirer un argument décisif en faveur ou non de la datation de A.2047 en ZL 5, car Yaqqim-Addu est déjà en poste vers l'an 3 et 4 selon B. Lion, « Les gouverneurs provinciaux du royaume de Mari à l'époque de Zimrī-Lim », *Amurru* 2, 2001, p. 180. Il ne devient pleinement gouverneur qu'en ZL 5.



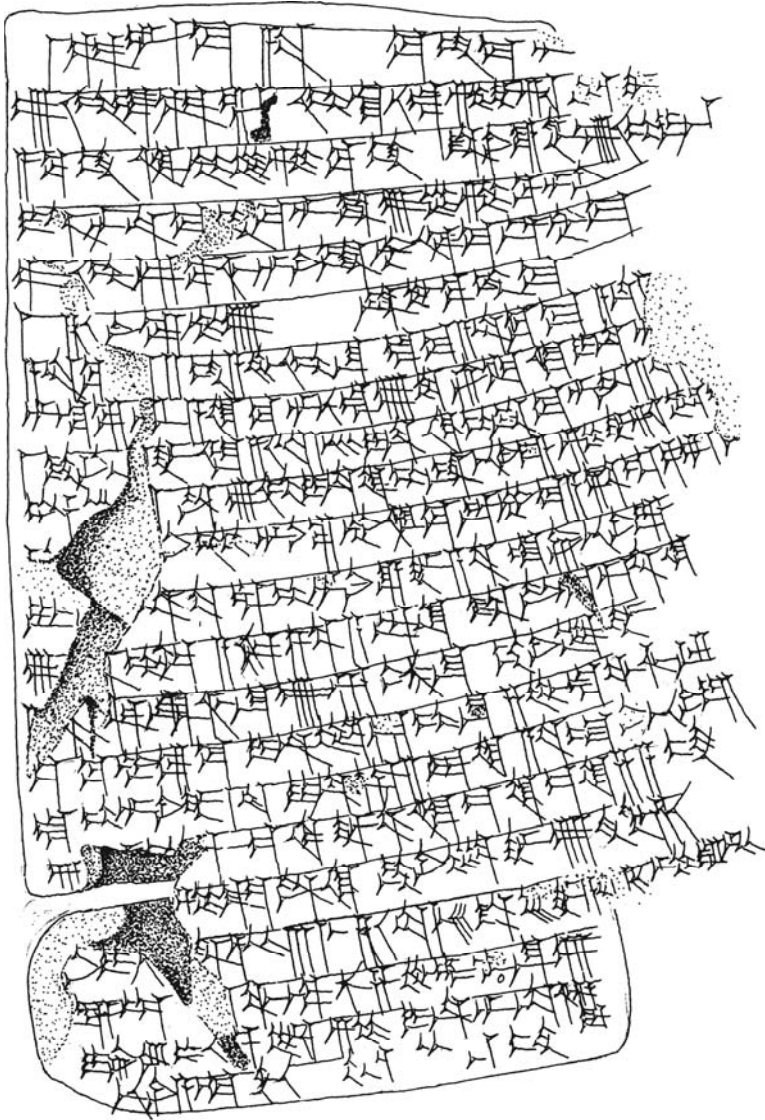
A.2047 (face)



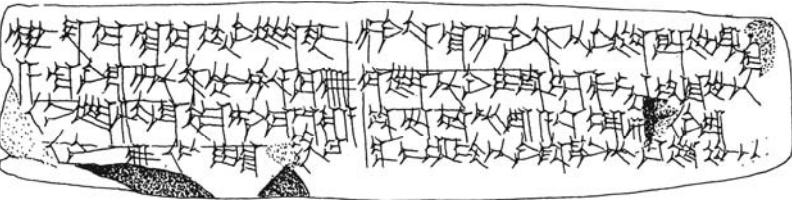
A.2047 (face et tranche inférieure)



A.2047 (revers)



A.2047 (revers et tranche supérieure)



A.2047 (côté gauche)

# **The Emergence of Monumental West Semitic Alphabetic Writing, with an Emphasis on Byblos**

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**Résumé.** *Le présent article met à jour certains points de vue évoqués par Sass (2005) et Finkelstein & Sass (2013) quant à l'écriture alphabétique monumentale, notamment à Byblos.\* Deux facteurs justifient cette mise au point : (1) la découverte que la transition du proto-canaanéen à la cursive doit être datée ca. 900 avant notre ère, et (2) une meilleure compréhension des racines cursives du ductus monumental ouest-sémitique.*

*\* Sass 2016: 207–215 s'intéresse aux plus anciennes inscriptions monumentales araméennes.*

## **1. The first historically dated monumental inscriptions in the West Semitic alphabet**

### **1.1. The first monumental inscriptions 1: Their dating ca 830 and their cursive roots**

The earliest historically dated monumental writing in the West Semitic alphabet from the first millennium is attributed to the last third of the ninth century. Six royal inscriptions from the entire Levant and the Jazira (Finkelstein and Sass 2013: 195) document this: Tell Fakhariya,<sup>1</sup> Sam'al (Kulamuwa), Tell Afis, and Tel

<sup>1</sup> The historical dating of Fakhariya is indirect (Sass 2005: 93–95).



Dan, as well as Diban and Karak in Moab (Mesha).<sup>2</sup> Prestige items inscribed for Hazael—two bronzes and two ivories—, though uncovered far away, add Damascus to this list. By contrast, Ahiram and four more kings of Byblos who left monumental inscriptions (KAI 1, 4, 5, 6, 7) have no comparable historical dating.<sup>3</sup>

Cursive writing, itself evolved from Proto-Canaanite several decades before 830, clearly inspired the script of the six dated inscriptions.<sup>4</sup> The script of the Byblos texts, too, imitates the cursive in part (Chapter 2). But the West Semitic alphabet in its non-monumental manifestation is earlier than that: stratigraphically dated inscriptions on pottery indicate that the alphabet, still as pre-cursive Proto-Canaanite, moved from south to north in the second half of the tenth century (early Iron IIA) from its core region, the Shephelah/Philistia, at least as far north as Rehov. Then in late Iron IIA/1, roughly the first half of the ninth century or slightly before, the alphabet spread to the entire Levant and the Jazira—presumably for use in documents written in ink as indicated by the streamlined, cursive shapes the letters were acquiring then (Sass and Finkelstein 2016: 37–38).<sup>5</sup>

When a few decades later, ca 830, the alphabet in the West Semitic kingdoms finally gained enough ground, the first monumental alphabetic inscriptions were set up. But unlike the spread of the alphabet itself from south to north several decades before,

<sup>2</sup> As a result of an incorrect reading, the non-royal Ördekburnu stele has occasionally been attributed to Haya, Kulamuwa's father, in about the second quarter of the ninth century (references in Lemaire and Sass 2013: 112, 118). The stele is probably to be dated between 820 and 760 BCE—based on palaeography (*ibid.*: 126).

<sup>3</sup> “Among the three main genres of monumental inscriptions of the period—commemorative, dedicatory and funerary—only the latter two are represented in Byblos” (Finkelstein and Sass 2013: note 196).

<sup>4</sup> The script phase classified as ‘post Proto-Canaanite’ in Finkelstein and Sass 2013 was re-labelled ‘earliest cursive’ or ‘first cursive’ in Sass and Finkelstein 2016: 30–33, and herein.

<sup>5</sup> The archaeological context and palaeography of the Megiddo jug sherd, Kefar Veradim bowl, and Ophel pithos sherd could indicate that Proto-Canaanite letter-shapes and left-to-right script were still in use in the earlier years of late Iron IIA or the first half of the ninth century (Sass and Finkelstein 2016: 39–40). But the evidence is still too slight to decide the issue.

the concept of monumentality moved in the opposite direction: it originated in the northern Levant (Section 1.2.), inspiring the south (Sass 2005: note 89). As no lapidary model for their letters existed,<sup>6</sup> a monumentalized version of the cursive was devised, apparently based on the earliest cursive of the first half of the ninth century (Sass 2016: 211; **Fig. 1** herein).<sup>7</sup> On the even more archaizing writing of Byblos and Fakhariya see Section 2.4.

As noted, the earliest alphabetic monuments appear across most of the Levant and in the Jazira.<sup>8</sup> As far south as Hamath, this meant a changeover to the local language and script;<sup>9</sup> the monumental tradition as such was already established (next section). Farther south, the monuments inscribed by local rulers were a novelty.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.2. The first monumental inscriptions 2: Luwian and Assyrian ancestry

But it was before ±830 that West Semitic speaking rulers had begun writing monumental inscriptions. Cuneiform and hieroglyphic-Luwian monuments from the late tenth to the early ninth

<sup>6</sup> A true lapidary style emerged in the West Semitic alphabet only much later (Naveh 1974: 57, followed in Sass and Marzahn 2010: 152, 161–162).

<sup>7</sup> That the ‘monumentalized cursive’ of ca 830 was itself archaizing to a degree becomes evident when it is set against the far more advanced *he*, *het* and *ṭet* in the Tell Deir ‘Alla texts written in ink on plaster, ca 800 BCE (**Fig. 2**).

<sup>8</sup> I.e. among the Aramaeans, Phoenicians, Ammonites and Moabites, not yet in ancient Israel, Judah and Philistia.

<sup>9</sup> The Fakhariya bilingual documents the transitional phase.

<sup>10</sup> Before the late ninth century, the only inscribed local monuments south of Hamath were those in the pseudo-hieroglyphic writing of Byblos (Sass 2005: 54, 70, 78); all others were Egyptian—either brought over from the Nile Valley, or erected on Levantine soil by New Kingdom pharaohs (*ibid.*: 57, with note 81) and Shoshenq I (the Megiddo stele). Proposals to attribute Assyrian reliefs with effaced inscriptions at Nahr el-Kalb to Tiglath-pileser I and Shalmaneser III could not be substantiated.

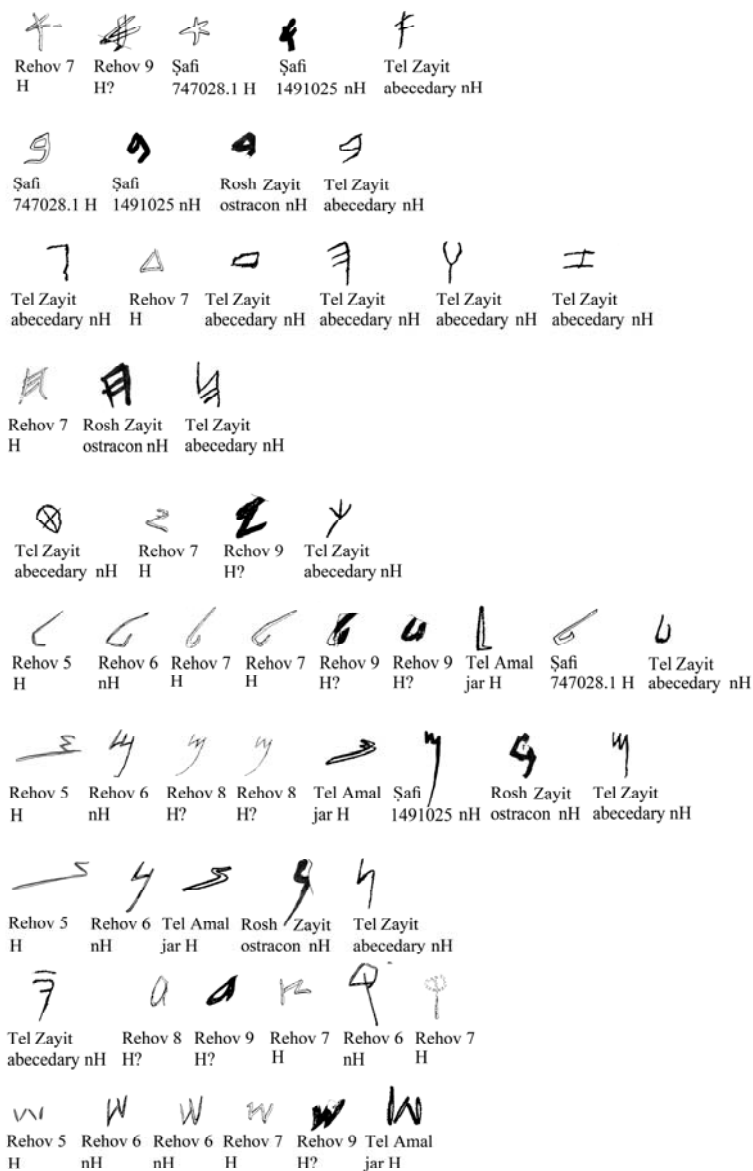


Fig. 1. Letters of the earliest stratified cursive inscriptions, late Iron IIA/1 (H = Hebrew, nH = non-Hebrew) (B. Sass after multiple sources in Sass 2016; Sass & Finkelstein 2016)









































a	b	a	b
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			

Fig. 2. Letters of the Tell Deir ‘Alla plaster texts (Hoftijzer & Kooij 1976: pl. 26)

centuries preceded the alphabetic monuments of that time—from Gozan in the north-east,<sup>11</sup> via Til Barsib<sup>12</sup> and presumably Tell Tayinat,<sup>13</sup> to Hamath in the central Levant (Sass 2005: 56–57),<sup>14</sup> but not farther south.<sup>15</sup> It seems, though the evidence so far is indirect, that in most of the Levant and the Jazira the alphabet had been employed first for documents, and only decades later did it acquire the status deemed suitable for inscribing monuments and prestige objects (Sass 2016: 207–215). As is to be expected, the forms and contents of the newly introduced monuments inscribed in the West Semitic alphabet owe much to their Luwian as well as their Assyrian precursors.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Kapara, king of Gozan, probably in the first half of the ninth century (Sass 2005: 93–95; Cholidis, Dubiel and Martin 2010: 360–361), wrote in Assyrian on his monuments, but his name is West Semitic.

<sup>12</sup> The name of Hamiyatas, ruler of Til Barsib-Masuware, could be a Luwian hieroglyphic guise of Aramaic *ʾmydʿ* or *ʾmytʿ* “the [divine] paternal uncle knows / has delivered” (respectively Bunnens 2006: 86, and Younger 2014: note 20).

<sup>13</sup> The name of Taita, the Luwian-writing ruler of Falasatin, is too short to yield a conclusive etymology, but despite his inferred Sea Peoples’ ancestry, Taita’s mother-tongue, like that of Kapara and Hamiyatas, could have been Aramaic (Sass 2016: note 37). The Falasatinean/Patinean rulers Sappalulme and Qalparunda at any rate bear names of a known provenance—‘foreign’ throne names, time-honoured in the region. The possibility that these rulers were Aramaeans as well should not be precluded in a tenth-ninth century northern Levantine context.

<sup>14</sup> The names of Urhilina/Urahilina and his son and successor Uratamis, kings of Hamath, may represent a phenomenon similar to Sappalulme and Qalparunda, but evidence is lacking. My thanks to Marc Weeden for pointing out onomastic problems to me.

<sup>15</sup> See note 10 for a possible exception.

<sup>16</sup> Luwian and Assyrian inscriptions mutually influenced each other in the first place: “Luwian display inscriptions were ‘always’ there, and the Assyrians themselves were inspired by them. Yet it is also true that the Assyrians joined in vigorously during the early part of the ninth century. In this way the debate on whether it was a Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Hittite archetype (Na’aman 2000: 94–95 versus Teixidor 2001: 670) that gave rise to the first Aramaic monumental inscriptions and played a role in shaping their contents loses its heat” (Sass 2005: 56).

### 1.3. The first monumental inscriptions 3: A special role of Hazael?

The emergence of the first historically dated monuments inscribed in the West Semitic alphabet overlaps the reign of Hazael (ca 840–805), so that the credit for their introduction south of Hamath–Damascus, Dan, Moab—may in theory be ascribed to him.<sup>17</sup> Did his initiative lead Aramaean rulers farther north to turn to Aramaic, their own language and script, in their monuments (I. Finkelstein, pers. comm.)? After all, Hazael may have dominated much of the Levant at least for a while (e.g., Eph'al and Naveh 1989: 198–200).<sup>18</sup>

Though the basalt fragment from Tell Afis mentions him by name, we do not know whether it was Hazael who influenced the switch to alphabetic monuments in Hamath.<sup>19</sup> Other contemporary monumental alphabetic texts can hardly be linked to him: Hazael was certainly not behind the inscriptions, Assyrian and Aramaic, on the statue of Hadyis'i, ruler of Gozan, uncovered at Tell Fakhariya, nor behind the Phoenician orthostat inscription of Kulamuwa, king of Sam'al, who mentions in it his overlord, the king of Assyria. In sum, therefore, while Hazael may have played a

<sup>17</sup> Nearly seventy years ago, Dupont-Sommer (1949: 83) made a similar observation, though not linked to a specific monarch: "It seems probable to us that the Aramaean dynasts, especially those of Damascus, were soon ready to assert their independence and the prestige of their nation by the use of their own language for the writing of inscriptions, annals, administrative documents." Le-maire (2015: 29) proposed that monumental writing in Moab in the late ninth century was ultimately due to Hazael.

<sup>18</sup> The anepigraphic Bethsaida stele depicting a stylized bull-headed divine figure and two or three others like it from southern Syria are very similar to another discovered near Gaziantep in southern Turkey, yet seemingly unparallelled in the northern Levant (Bernett and Keel 1998: 10–11). The similarity is so marked that Hazael's reign may constitute the sole plausible setting for all these steles together (Brandl 1999).

<sup>19</sup> "Amadasi Guzzo (2009: 341) made a plausible case for Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lu'sh, as author of the Afis monument at the beginning of his reign ca 805, believed to have overlapped Hazael's last years. But it is in fact unknown which king commissioned the monument—Hazael, Birhadad or Zakkur—nor whether Hazael is mentioned in it as a reigning monarch or as the deceased father of Birhadad... (lḥz[l 'by]?)" (Sass 2016: 207).

role in launching the earliest West Semitic monumental inscriptions ca 830, he was probably not the sole actor.

## **2. Where do the royal Byblos inscriptions fit into the alphabetic sequence?**

“When the distinct character of letters cut in hard surfaces (as opposed to ink inscriptions) is heeded and sufficient attention paid to archaizing traits denoting artificiality in the script, when one cares to look for cursive-like and ‘eccentric’ features... that can reveal for a monumental inscription a palaeographical date later than that indicated by most of its archaizing letters, the points where Fekherieh and Byblos seemingly contradict relative chronology do find an easy explanation within the ‘traditional’ letter typology; but at a considerably lower absolute date” (Sass 2005: 72, partly re-phrased).

For the tenth century [my ninth-eighth, B.S.] “there is a risk in comparing the scripts of graffiti written on pots with inscriptions engraved on stone monuments” (Millard 2016: 274–275).

Adhering to these principles, the present chapter integrates new evidence with earlier studies of the royal Byblos inscriptions from Sass 2005 and Finkelstein & Sass 2013.

### **2.1. The Albright–Cross chronological framework: ca 1000–900 BCE**

Albright (1947: 160) arranged the five royal Byblos inscriptions in a sequence from ca 1000 to 900 BCE. He began with Ahiram and inserted kings Abibaal and Elibaal in the second half of the tenth century. He assumed they were contemporaries of Shoshenq I and Osorkon I.<sup>20</sup> Adopting Albright’s scheme, Cross (e.g., 1954, 9–11; Cross and McCarter 1973: 5) considered several short inscriptions

<sup>20</sup> A statue of Shoshenq I found in Byblos was re-inscribed for Abibaal, a statue of Osorkon I for Elibaal (Sass 2005: 16–17, with earlier literature).

from Byblos to be the earliest documentation (ca 1050 BCE) of the alphabet at this site. He also considered Ahiṣar's sarcophagus text the earliest Phoenician, or 'post Proto-Canaanite' inscription (ca 1000 BCE), of any length. This in turn led to dating all Proto-Canaanite texts in the 11th century at the latest ('cement floor' in Finkelstein & Sass 2013: 182). Consequently, Cross believed that Phoenician was the first language-related strain of the alphabet, evolved directly from Proto-Canaanite. The Hebrew and Aramaic varieties then branched off from the Phoenician some 100–150 years later. Naveh's stemma of the various alphabetic scripts (Naveh 1982: 10; see also Sass 2005: 12) reflects Cross's views for the most part.

Cross and Albright could argue all of the above only because no later Proto-Canaanite inscription (i.e., post Late Bronze) known through the 1970s originated from a secure archaeological context. This enabled them to claim that the said inscriptions belonged *en masse* in Iron I—ca 1200–1000 according to their chronology—and that none of them originated in Iron IIA.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.2. The weaknesses of the Albright-Cross framework

Even when, since the late 1970s, a trickle of Proto-Canaanite inscriptions from archaeological contexts later than the eleventh century began (for instance on the Tekke bowl), Cross and his followers consistently 'aged' them in order to maintain Ahiṣar at 1000 BCE.<sup>22</sup> This ultra-high benchmark has led epigraphic research astray for decades, and, to a certain extent, it still does (e.g., Rollston 2016: 20–22). A few earlier examples follow.

<sup>21</sup> See further Finkelstein & Sass 2013: 157, 176, 186–187, on the apparent absence of alphabetic inscriptions from unequivocal Iron I contexts, as well as a proposed explanation.

<sup>22</sup> "In order to maintain the 1000 B.C.E. dating for Ahiṣar, certain proponents of the high epigraphy chronology declared any inscription contradicting their view an heirloom, or otherwise 'aged' it—the Tekke and Kefar Veradim bowls, Fekheryeh inscription, etc. And in case 'aging' proved impossible, they proclaimed the relevant inscription either a forgery or non-West Semitic" (Finkelstein & Sass 2013: 182).



- *Edith Porada*. The Albright-Cross scheme led Porada (1973: 364) to the following circular reasoning, even though it went contrary to her own judgment: “Many of the features of the sarcophagus classified in this essay as belonging to the early first millennium BCE on the basis of Assyrian monuments [of the ninth-seventh centuries, B.S.], may have actually originated in Phoenicia. *Such an assumption presupposes a flourishing art in that region about 1000 B.C., of which the sarcophagus of Ahiiram would be the only survival that can be recognized on the basis of its inscription, dated about 1000 B.C. by most of the leading paleographers [italics B.S.]*” (already quoted in Sass 2005: 21–22). Presumably, Porada had persuaded herself that the link from letter typology to absolute dating was somehow more authoritative, more ‘scientific’ than her own link from image typology.
- *Joseph Naveh*. Influenced, as nearly everyone else in the 1980s, by F.M. Cross’s attribution of the royal Byblos inscriptions to the tenth century with Ahiiram at 1000 BCE, Naveh was led to believe that the earliest script phase following the end of Proto-Canaanite was somehow restricted to royal monuments, hence lapidary.<sup>23</sup> Naveh did not identify these inscriptions specifically. Yet what can they be if not the inscriptions from Byblos?<sup>24</sup> See also Naveh’s definition (1982: 66) of the letter-forms of Moabite stone inscriptions as lapidary. These scenarios have no foundation in the evidence, however (Section 2.4.). And Naveh, too, sensed the contradiction: in the paragraph just cited, and elsewhere in his book, he inserted accurate observations to the contrary, emphasizing the cursive origin of the monuments’ script: “Even in the Mesha and Kamošyat stelae, the curved diagonal strokes of the *kaf*, *mem*, *nun* and *pe* are cursive developments” (Naveh 1982: 67).

<sup>23</sup> “When confined to a royal court or to the priesthood, the script was used mainly for stelae and thus remained conservative, preserving the older forms. At that stage there existed only one style, known as lapidary. Since it was confined to script inscribed on stone, it did not lend itself to rapid development” (Naveh 1982: 7).

<sup>24</sup> After all, Naveh believed that they were the oldest monumental inscriptions in the West Semitic alphabet—from the tenth century (*ibid.*: 53–54).

- Reinhard Lehmann. Similarly, Lehmann (2008: 143–144, and *passim*; 2012: 31) remarked with good reason on the cursive origin of Ahiiram’s script.<sup>25</sup> However, by keeping to the Albright-Cross 1000 BCE dating of Ahiiram, Lehmann missed the key point.

Another weakness of the Albright-Cross scheme arises from the lack of secure links to historical chronology for all of the kings named in the five Byblos inscriptions. As is well known, Abibaal and Elibaal come closest to a historical anchor, for their names have been added respectively to a statue of Shoshenq I and another of Osorkon I. But, as is likewise well known, this stroke of luck provides the two Byblian monarchs with a *terminus post quem* only. Yet, in order to maintain the Byblos inscriptions in the tenth century, most specialists—from Albright 1947 onwards and against standard archaeological practice—convinced themselves that Abibaal and Elibaal *must* have been contemporaries of the two Pharaohs, around the second half of the tenth century. Section 2.4 advances the rationale for a much lower and, I believe better founded, Byblos chronology.<sup>26</sup>

### 2.3. Cursive-influenced letter shapes in the Byblos inscriptions

This section updates the discussion on the cursive-like letter shapes in the Byblos inscriptions and their chronological significance.<sup>27</sup> *Vis-à-vis* the seven letters in Sass 2005: 24–25, 30–31, I now propose removing *zayin* from the list and adding *het*, *ṭet*, *yod* and

<sup>25</sup> In his note 43, Lehmann gave Zuckerman and Swartz Dodd (2003: 107) due credit for this insight: “[I]t would be hard to find any exceptions to the rule that scribes writing Northwest Semitic inscriptions essentially rely on ink-made strokes as their models, the common point of reference for any and all script styles, regardless of medium.”

<sup>26</sup> Albright’s chronology was well suited for the state of knowledge in the 1940s and 50s, and perhaps even the 60s (Finkelstein and Sass 2013: 181).

<sup>27</sup> Not the archaizing and ‘eccentric’ letter-shapes. A treatment of these, which still seems essentially valid to me, appears in Sass 2005: 28–34.

*samek*—ten letters in all, or some 45 % of the alphabet (**Fig. 3**). Most often only some (occasionally just one) of the examples of a given letter in all five inscriptions display a relatively advanced, cursive-derived shape, whereas others are archaizing, e.g., in *waw*, *yod*, *mem* or *nun*.

- *he* and *het*. Alongside archaizing or Proto-Canaanite, reversed-E examples, Ahiṣam displays several legged *hes* (e.g., in *ʾbh*, **Fig. 4**) of cursive ancestry. On the other hand, there are no *hes* from Byblos with acute angles or top-left inclination, another cursive feature of the same letter.<sup>28</sup> But the majority of the Byblos *hets*, quite close to *he* in shape, are acute-angled as in the cursive.
- *waw*. Most occurrences from Byblos are of the archaizing ‘crescent on shaft’ variety, but the far end of the shaft in several examples bends leftwards in the cursive manner (Lehmann 2008: 145–147). One, in *ʾdtw* in Shipiṭbaal, **Fig. 5**, could be of the more advanced, asymmetric shape, cursive in origin. A maladroit ‘crescent on shaft’ form is alternatively possible, however.
- *tet*. While Ahiṣam’s *tet* is in the archaizing form of a cross within a circle (similar to the ʿIzbet Ṣarṭah and Tel Zayit letters), at least one of Shipiṭbaal’s *tets* displays what seems to be an abbreviated version, cursive in origin, of a single stroke within a circle.
- *yod*. Most Byblos *yods* belong to the angular type, at home in late Proto-Canaanite as well as in the earliest cursive. Yet some *yods* in Elibaal, Ahiṣam, and Yahimilk display a rounded body, deriving from rapid writing with pen and ink in the Phoenician alphabet variety (e.g. *byḥmlk* in Elibaal, **Fig. 6** and *bny yḥmlk* in Yahimilk, **Fig. 7**). On the other hand, the counterclockwise rotation, known from later rounded Phoenician *yods*, is not yet present.

<sup>28</sup> Acute-angled and/or tilted *hes* abound in the Fakhariya inscription, however, which makes them the most prominent cursive-like shapes in that mostly archaizing inscription.



Fig. 3. Cursive-inspired letter shapes in the royal Byblos inscriptions (B. Sass after multiple sources in Sass 2005: 24–25)



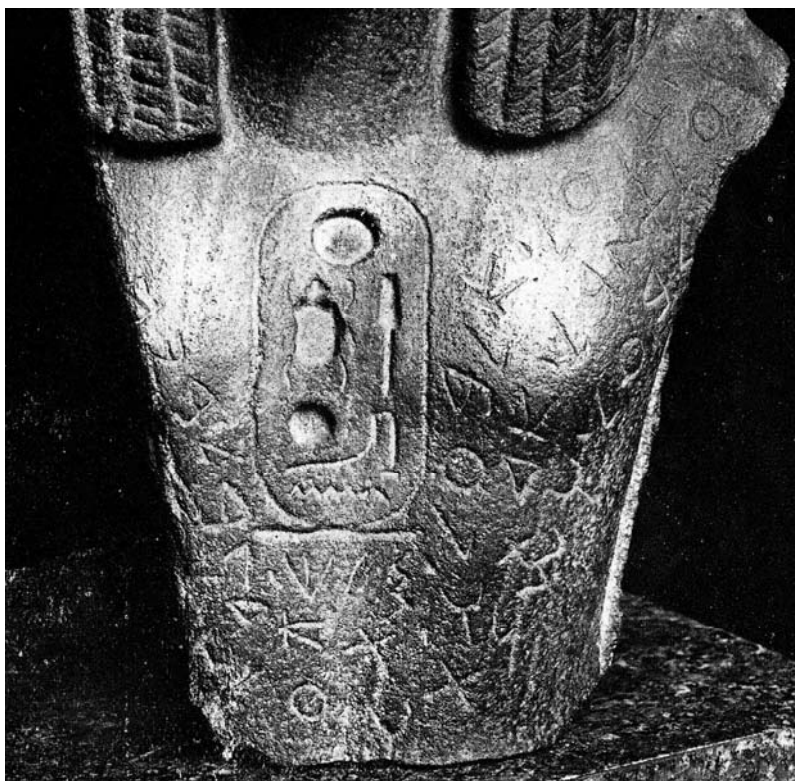
Fig. 4. Byblos, Ahiram's sarcophagus inscription, Beirut Museum 2086 (Courtesy Beirut National Museum and West Semitic Research Project)



*Fig. 5. Byblos, Shipitbaal inscription, Beirut Museum 2044 (Courtesy Beirut National Museum and West Semitic Research Project)*

- *mem* and *nun*. In many examples of these two similar letters in the Byblos inscriptions, all strokes are of more or less the same length—an archaizing, Proto-Canaanite-like feature. In Ahiram, Abibaal, and Shipitbaal, however, the rightmost stroke may show some lengthening, becoming a so-called leg, cursive in origin (e.g., in *wtmʾ mḥnt* in Ahiram, **Fig. 4**, *bmšrm* in Abibaal, **Fig. 8**).
- *samek*. In Ahiram’s *sameks*, the vertical continues further down beyond the three horizontals to form the letter’s leg. In this cursive-influenced feature, the *samek* resembles *mem* and *nun*.<sup>29</sup> There is no clear-cut *samek* yet in the earliest cursive inscriptions from archaeological contexts dated to late Iron IIA/1. The Tel Zayit letter, excessively restored in the *editio princeps* drawing (Tappy *et al.* 2006: 27), looks partly obliterated in the published photographs and in Ada Yardeni’s superior drawing (**Fig. 1**). All the same, its vertical seems to be as long as Ahiram’s (i.e., cursive-inspired).
- *qop*. The pre-cursive circle-on-shaft letter, as possibly in the ‘Izbet Ṣarṭah ostrakon, evolved into a bisected circle on a shaft. In ink inscriptions this cursive form was no doubt devised so that the *qop* could be written with a single stroke of the pen, but the circle has not yet begun to open (compare Lemaire and Sass 2013: 126). The incised *qop* in Rehov 6 (**Fig. 1**) is written with separate strokes for the head and the shaft, but from the position of the latter, one could assume that the scribe was familiar with the bisected form. In Rehov 7, the head of the letter is missing. In Shipitbaal (**Fig. 5**) the head of the *qop* is not bisected, whereas in Yahimilk it is (Sass 2005: 32).
- *taw*. The archaizing symmetric *taw*—either + -shaped or × -shaped—is the rule in the Byblos inscriptions. An asymmetric

<sup>29</sup> In the 12th century, the vertical in this rare letter was just connecting the three horizontals—as in the Lachish jar sherd—and it remained more or less unchanged until the end of Proto-Canaanite in the tenth or early ninth century—as in the Kefar Veradim bowl (Sass *et al.* 2015: 242).



*Fig. 6. Byblos, Elibaal inscription, Paris, Musée du Louvre AO 9502  
(Montet 1928: pl. 37)*



Fig. 7. Byblos, Yahimilk inscription, Beirut Museum 2043 (Courtesy Beirut National Museum and West Semitic Research Project)





© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Vorderasiatisches Museum, Foto: Olaf M. Teßmer



© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Vorderasiatisches Museum, Foto: Olaf M. Teßmer

Fig 8. Byblos, Abibaal inscription, Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum 3361  
(© Staatliche Museen zu Berlin — Vorderasiatisches Museum, photographer:  
Olaf M. Teßmer)

shape of cursive origin appears only in the unprovenanced Bordreuil champlevé inscription (**Fig. 9**, no royal name preserved) with parallels in Kulamuwa (**Fig. 10**), for instance.<sup>30</sup>

The mix of ‘modern’ and old looking (archaizing and ‘eccentric’) shapes characterizes all five royal Byblos inscriptions. Among these, the ‘modern’ Kulamuwa-like forms (**Fig. 3**) betray the time of writing, which with five kings at least likely extended into the eighth century. The next section addresses the consequences.



Fig. 9. Unprovenanced (ostensibly Byblos), Bordreuil champlevé inscription, Paris, Musée Bible et Terre Sainte 4022 (Bordreuil 1977: pl. 5)

<sup>30</sup> Known since 1977, this inscription and the question of its authenticity bothered no one initially. Only when it was pointed out (Sass 2005: 32–33) that this *taw* compromises the Albright–Cross chronology did certain colleagues declare the champlevé inscription a forgery (e.g., Rollston 2008: note 46; Lemaire 2012: note 27). Indeed, the similarities of the *lamed*, *pe*, and *taw* to their Kulamuwa counterparts discredited the champlevé inscription for Lemaire, but the resemblance with Kulamuwa is not exclusive to the champlevé inscription. It extends to most non-archaizing letters in the five royal Byblos inscriptions (**Fig. 3**). Recognizing the different chronological roles played by the archaizing, ‘eccentric’, and modern or cursive-like letterforms in monumental inscriptions, in particular those from Byblos and Fakhariya, will have served our colleagues better.

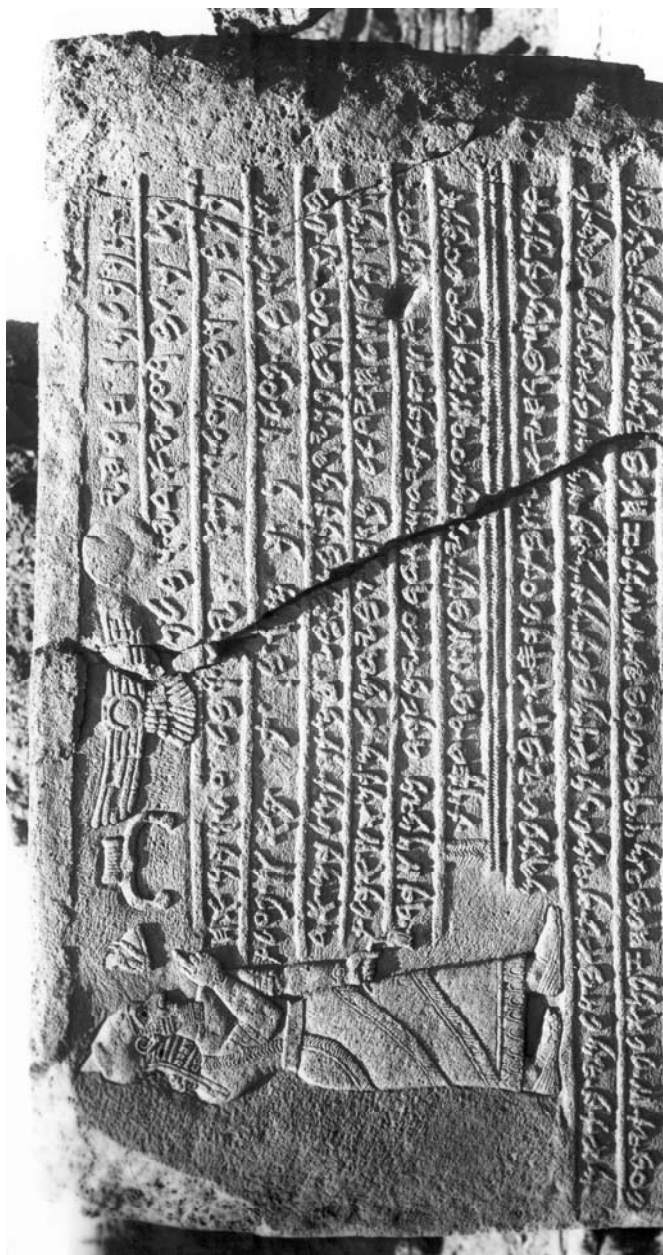


Fig. 10. Zincirli, Kulamuwa orthostat inscription, Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum S 6579 (excavation photograph S 015, © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin — Vorderasiatisches Museum, Fotoarchiv)

## **2.4. The Byblos inscriptions: *terminus post quem* 900 BCE; actual duration 830–730?**

***The Byblos inscriptions—no earlier than ca 900 BCE.*** Albright (1947: 154) ascribed the five royal Byblos inscriptions to a period of roughly a century,<sup>31</sup> a plausible timespan that he famously fixed at 1000–900 BCE (*ibid.*: 160). More than a decade ago, I proposed moving that century to ca 850–750 (Sass 2005: 49–50).<sup>32</sup> My reasoning was twofold: on the one hand, art-historical, by dated parallels for Ahiiram’s reliefs (*ibid.*: 75–82); on the other, palaeographical, by comparisons with less advanced writing on finds from undisturbed archaeological contexts later than 1000 BCE (*ibid.*: 39, 70–71). Two more developments have entered the discussion since:

- A better understanding of the cursive roots of the Byblos monumental ductus (Zuckerman & Swartz Dodd 2003: 107, and Lehmann 2008: 144, followed and expanded herein).
- The discovery via stratified non-monumental inscriptions that the transition from Proto-Canaanite to cursive script occurred ca 900 (Sass & Finkelstein 2016: 39–40).

I should add that, until a decade or two ago, there were very few published inscriptions from good Iron IIA contexts, roughly 950–800, and, until Finkelstein & Sass 2013, no one attempted a synthesis founded on such finds. Moreover, stratified inscriptions of the transitional phase from Proto-Canaanite to cursive were un-

<sup>31</sup> The five royal inscriptions could mention a maximum of nine kings if one assumes recurring dynastic names and if both Ahiiram and his son reigned (Sass 2005: 47, with earlier literature).

<sup>32</sup> Wallenfels (1983) was the first to argue for a lowering of the Byblos dates. Though his rationale for a timespan in the eighth or seventh century did not seem firm enough to me, in the 1980s I too began to doubt the validity of Albright’s arguments for his exceedingly high dating. If, in 1988 (e.g., p. 154), I settled for hints rather than a general revision of the absolute chronology of the alphabet at the turn of the second millennium, it was for practical reasons: the time was not right (Sass 2005: 13).

known altogether until last year when the Megiddo jug sherd was published (Sass & Finkelstein 2016).

With its cursive-like component, the Byblos script thus cannot be older than the very first cursive texts from late Iron IIA/1 archaeological contexts, penned fully right to left. Earlier, in the second half of the tenth century or early Iron IIA, the letters of the alphabet were still very different—wholly pre-cursive Proto-Canaanite, and multi-directional.<sup>33</sup> In other words, irrespective of the numerous archaisms,<sup>34</sup> the ten advanced, cursive-like letter shapes evidently betray the actual time of writing of the Byblos texts—a time not before the ninth century.<sup>35</sup>

***The Byblos inscriptions—possibly ca 830–730.*** Nonetheless, a beginning ca 900 is but a *terminus post quem*; the period ca 830–730 for the ‘Byblos century’, while still unverifiable, seems to me to fit the general picture better. As a working hypothesis I propose that the earliest royal Byblos monuments, unable to be dated historically, belong to the same phenomenon as the earliest monumental West Semitic inscriptions (Fakhariya, Kulamuwa, Dan, Mesha...), dated by their links to the absolute chronology of Assyria in the second half or last third of the ninth century:

“Rather than as a unique, isolated phenomenon of the tenth century as Albright and his followers would have it..., we regard the five royal Byblos inscriptions as part of the broader Levantine pattern of monumental alphabetic writing that first emerged in the second half of the ninth century” (Finkelstein & Sass 2013: note 196).

<sup>33</sup> From the Late Bronze Age until some point in early Iron IIA, the 13th–10th centuries, the alphabet in its Proto-Canaanite stage—with no monument—was still confined to the Shephelah/Philistia (Finkelstein & Sass 2013: 164–166, 187–189, updated in Sass & Finkelstein 2016: 37–38).

<sup>34</sup> For instance the ubiquitous Proto-Canaanite-like Byblos *kap*, trident-shaped without a leg.

<sup>35</sup> As we know from the Fakhariya *he*, even a single cursive form among an absolute majority of archaizing, Proto-Canaanite-like letters suffices (Sass 2005: 40).

To some extent, the following considerations bolster this assumption:

- The ten cursive-influenced letterforms in the royal Byblos inscriptions are quite similar to their counterparts in Kulamuwa, ca 830 (**Fig. 3**).
- The Fakhariya script, too, displays archaizing and ‘eccentric’ letter shapes, in fact twice as many as in Byblos, even while Fakhariya belongs ca 830 BCE (Sass 2005: 46).

**A historical dating for Shipitbaal?** With the timeframe proposed herein, one of the five royal authors could in theory be historically dated: Shipitbaal might be the same person as his namesake on the Byblian throne, mentioned by Tiglath-pileser III in 738 BCE (RINAP I: 14 11, etc.).<sup>36</sup> This cannot be verified, however, and a predecessor—two, three, or four generations earlier—is equally possible, as the Byblos inscriptions do not reflect a century of living script.

**An artificial script—no inner order.** A majority of archaizing and ‘eccentric’ letterforms, hence a near absence of palaeographical development for about a century (Sass 2005: 46), characterize the Byblos script as largely artificial. This majority precludes arranging the five texts sequentially (*ibid.*: 27, 60),<sup>37</sup> not even permitting the placement of Shipitbaal as last in the series (*ibid.*: 47, including earlier literature).<sup>38</sup> With the earliest inscription (as yet un-

<sup>36</sup> Benjamin Mazar was the first to propose this scenario (1946: 174, 178 [= 1986: 240, 244]), only to reject it later when he acquiesced to Albright’s high chronology (1964: note 29).

<sup>37</sup> “The Ahiṣam sarcophagus can fit happily earlier than those [Abibaal, Elibaal, Yaḥimilk and Shipitbaal], at the beginning of the tenth century B.C., although basing its date on the small palaeographic difference between its letters and those of the other texts mentioned is precarious, given the way the letters are cut in the stones” (Millard 1991: 102). I follow Millard on the relative chronology, or rather its absence, while disagreeing on the absolute dating.

<sup>38</sup> Albright and Cross believed that Shipitbaal’s inscription was the latest in the Byblos series, ca 900, as it seemed to them to include more developed letterforms (a notion accepted in Sass 2005: 46, and now discarded). In fact, each of

identifiable), a standard of monumental script was set at Byblos that was maintained with minor modifications for the next reigns.<sup>39</sup> This should come as no surprise in monumental inscriptions that often are meant to maintain a solemn, time-honoured appearance. Indeed, even the cursive-like Byblos letters seem to have been somewhat archaizing already ca 830 (note 7), let alone later.

***When were the inscriptions of Abibaal and Elibaal added to the statues of Shoshenq I and Osorkon I?*** One advocate of the high chronology of Albright-Cross for the Byblos inscriptions, Alan Millard (2012: 408; 2016: 274), argued that “it is hard to suppose that rulers of a place which had long-standing connections with Egypt would offer to their patron deity statues of long-dead pharaohs.” Millard justly underscored the voyage of an Egyptian sculptor to Ugarit to fashion a statue of the new Pharaoh for the temple of Baal, an event documented in a letter from the time of Merneptah’s accession.<sup>40</sup>

Yet this testimony is too equivocal to be of use:<sup>41</sup> when the archaeological context of Egyptian statues in the Levant is known (not so for the two Byblos statues), it is always later than the stat-

the other four Byblos texts, too, displays developed letterforms of cursive origin (Section 2.3.).

<sup>39</sup> Sam’al attests a comparable phenomenon, this time with the added benefit of dated monarchs: “Panamuwa I, half a century after Kulamuwa and possibly more, practically imitated Kulamuwa’s letter shapes in his own Hadad inscription, while in the next monuments—of Panamuwa II and Barrakib—just a few letters are more advanced. Looking at all Zincirli inscriptions together, it may be suggested that the earliest monument of Sam’al was subsequently regarded as a standard to be followed for the letterforms—strictly for the first two generations or so, and with the occasional concession to ‘modernity’ thereafter” (Lemaire & Sass 2013: 126). However, the archaism of Kulamuwa reaches only as far back as the earliest cursive, not to Proto-Canaanite as in Fakhariya and Byblos (Sass 2005: 46).

<sup>40</sup> Lackenbacher (1995a: 110–111, 116; 1995b: 78–79); see further Dijkstra 2016. Lackenbacher (1995a: 116, with note 36) also alluded to the Byblos statues of Shoshenq and Osorkon, as did Dijkstra (2016: 123).

<sup>41</sup> Moreover, this is not the principal question—see main text below.

ues' historical or stylistic dating.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, these statues could as well reflect a trade in prestigious antiques.<sup>43</sup>

In other words, it is impossible to determine the time when an Egyptian statue arrived in the Levant based on the dating of the statue alone. Furthermore, the question of whether Shoshenq I and Osorkon I were alive when their statues arrived in Byblos or whether they were dead is of secondary significance anyway: as far as the history of the West Semitic alphabet is concerned, the principal chronological question is whether a dating can be attributed to the Phoenician texts added to the statues. As noted above it can: Abibaal and Elibaal re-inscribed them—in a largely archaizing script—no earlier than ca 900 BCE, and possibly no earlier than 830.<sup>44</sup>

***Lastly—the dating of linguistic phenomena.*** If the royal Byblos inscriptions belong in the ninth-eighth centuries, linguistic phenomena in them will have to be reconsidered (Sass 2005: note 13). For instance, the presumed earliest documentation of the Phoenician article, in Yahimilk (*hbtm*, **Fig. 7**), commonly thought to date ca 950 BCE (PPG: 210 [§ 296]; Tropper 2001: note 81), moves down by more than a century, perhaps 150 years, to about the time of Kulamuwa. This Sam'alīan king, too, employs the article in his

<sup>42</sup> For instance, a sphinx of the 18th-century Pharaoh Ammenemes III found at the temple of Baal at Ugarit in a context of the 13th–12th centuries (e.g., Ahrens 2006: 25–26; 2011: 294). Besides, there is evidence for Second Intermediate Period plundering of Middle Kingdom cemeteries, which could have been one of the sources for such inscribed funerary statues found in the Levant (Ahrens 2016: 22–23).

<sup>43</sup> E.g. Weinstein 1974; 1975; Helck 1976; Ahrens 2006: 26–29. Ben-Tor (2017: 584), and Bechar (2017: 60, 70), referred *inter alia* to a sphinx of the fourth-dynasty Pharaoh Mycerinus, unearthed in Hazor's Late Bronze Age destruction level. The arrival of this sphinx at Hazor as early as the Early Bronze Age is not very likely.

<sup>44</sup> According to this chronology, Abibaal turns out to be decidedly later than Shoshenq I. Yet, the potential contemporaneity of Elibaal with Osorkon I cannot be precluded, despite my own preference for a later beginning of the Byblos series, ca 830.



Phoenician inscription (e.g., *hspr*, *loc. cit.*).<sup>45</sup> In the mid-tenth century or the Iron I-II transition, the sole lengthy alphabetic inscription is the Proto-Canaanite Qeiyafa ostrakon, in which the article has not been identified.<sup>46</sup> In any case, this ostrakon is palaeographically incomparable to the Byblos script.

## 2.5. Review of Results

The writing of all the monumental inscriptions addressed herein is archaizing to a degree. Fakhariya and Byblos do this more than the rest. Recognizing the archaizing, ‘eccentric’, and modern or cursive-like letter shapes in these inscriptions and the different chronological role played by each script variety is indispensable for establishing a relative and absolute dating.

Sass (2005) addressed the chronology of the royal Byblos inscriptions in detail, while Finkelstein & Sass (2013) offered a synopsis. The present paper reiterates much of the Byblos evidence and hypotheses, while simultaneously integrating new perspectives. The latter are:

- 1. A better recognition of cursive-like traits in all the early monumental West Semitic inscriptions.
- 2. The recent attribution of the Proto-Canaanite-to-cursive transition in stratified texts to ca 900 BCE or about the Iron IIA early-late transition.

Combined with existing observations, these two perceptions mark the emergence of the cursive ca 900 BCE as a *terminus post quem* for the initial monumental West Semitic inscriptions, including Byblos. By contrast, my preference for anchoring the earliest among the Byblos series specifically ca 830, roughly simultaneously with the earliest historically dated monumental inscrip-

<sup>45</sup> On the chronology of the 3rd m.s. pron. suffix *-h*, and the Gt form, in the Byblos inscriptions, see Sass 2005: 20–21.

<sup>46</sup> Beside its abecedary, the ‘Izbet Šarṭah Ostrakon bears no intelligible text.

tions in the West Semitic alphabet, is currently supported by circumstantial evidence only. Time will tell.

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# Crushing the Locust in Sefire I A, 24: A New Look at the Curse

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**Résumé.** La malédiction de l'inscription de Sfiré I A, 24 demeure obscure plus de quatre-vingts ans après sa découverte. Dans cet article, nous proposons une nouvelle interprétation de cette malédiction fondée sur un examen des photographies et de l'estampage de l'inscription.

## 1. Previous interpretations of the curse in Sefire I A, 24

The meaning of the sentence ושבע בכֹּנֶתָה יִהְיוּ בָשֶׁט לַחֶם וְאֵל יִהְיוּ in the Aramaic inscription from Sefire I A, 24 has been much discussed. This sentence appears in the 8th century Aramaic *adê*-treaty between Bar-Ga'yah, king of KTK, and Mati<sup>el</sup>, king of Arpad. It is written in the context of curses describing what will happen if Mati<sup>el</sup> betrays the stipulations formulated in this treaty with Bar-Ga'yah. It concludes the section of curses whose parallels are attested in other two Aramaic inscriptions; the inscription on the statue from Tell Fekheryie (Akkadian version, lines 30-36 and Aramaic version, lines 18-22) as well as the inscription

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from Bukan (lines 5-7). But the particular curse, to which we devote this study, is not attested there.

We mention as examples the following transcriptions and translations of Sefire I A, 24:

- Sébastien Ronzevalle: “et sept chamelles chargées de pain grillé et une autre offrande en plus”.<sup>1</sup>

- Hans Bauer: “und seine sieben Töchter mögen im Herumschweifen nach Brot gehen, und sie sollen nicht ...!”<sup>2</sup>

- André Dupont-Sommer: “et que sept poules aillent en quête de nourriture, et qu’elles ne tuent rien!”<sup>3</sup>

- Reiner Degen: “(without translation).”<sup>4</sup>

- Joseph A. Fitzmyer: “and should seven *hens* go looking for food, may then not *kill* (anything)!”<sup>5</sup>

- Edward Lipiński: “and should seven hens of his go about during a food shortage, may they not be slaughtered!”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Ronzevalle, “Fragments d’inscriptions araméennes des environs d’Alep”, *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* 15 (1930-1931), p. 237-260, Figures I-V, pl. XXXIX-XLV (p. 244 and fig. II).

<sup>2</sup> H. Bauer, “Ein aramäischer Staatsvertrag aus dem 8. Jahrhundert v. Chr. Die Inschrift der Stele von Sudschîn”, *Archiv für Orientforschung* 8 (1932-1933), p. 1-15, especially p. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> A. Dupont-Sommer, “Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré”, *Mémoires présentés par divers savants à l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 15.1 (1960), p. 197-321, especially p. 214-215.

<sup>4</sup> R. Degen, *Altaramäische Grammatik der Inschriften des 10.-8. Jh. v. Chr.* (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 38.3), Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft – Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner, 1969, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (Biblica et orientalia, 19/A), Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1995, p. 44-45.

<sup>6</sup> E. Lipiński, “Re-reading the Inscriptions from Sefire”, in idem, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics I* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 1), Leuven: University Press, 1975, p. 24-57, especially p. 28 and 49.

• J. C. L. Gibson: “his seven daughters shall go walking while the bread gets burnt, but let them show no concern (= רגג)!”<sup>7</sup>

• H. Donner and W. Röllig: “und sieben Hennen sollen auf Nahrungssuche gehen und werden doch nichts töten!”<sup>8</sup>

• André Lemaire: “et que ses sept filles aillent pour un morceau de pain et qu’elles ne soient pas désirées (= רגג ‘to desire’ in passive causative stem)!”<sup>9</sup>

• Émile Puech: “et que ses sept boulangères s’en aillent tandis que brûle (grille) le pain, et qu’elles ne soient pas tuées!”<sup>10</sup> Later he corrected his reading to “ושבע דגנתה ואל יהדגן (?)” “et que ses sept panetières (?) s’en aillent pendant que grille le pain et qu’il ne soit pas empilé (= דגן in passive causative stem, 3rd pers. m. sg. ‘to be piled up’)”.<sup>11</sup>

• Stephen A. Kaufman: “and may his seven daughters bake bread in an oven (?) but not fill (it)”.<sup>12</sup>

• Hélène Sader: “et que 7 poules (?) aillent en quête de nourriture et qu’elles ne tuent pas”.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syriac Semitic Inscriptions*. Vol. 2: *Aramaic Inscriptions Including Inscriptions in the Dialect of Zenjirli*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 30-31.

<sup>8</sup> H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. Band 1 (5., erweiterte und überarbeitete Auflage), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002, p. 52; idem, Band 2: *Kommentar*, (zweite, durchgesehene und erweiterte Auflage), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1968, p. 239.

<sup>9</sup> A. Lemaire, “Sfire I A 24 et l’araméen šṭ”, *Henoch* 3 (1981), p. 161-170; A. Lemaire and J. M. Durand, *Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré et l’Assyrie de Shamshi-ilu* (Hautes études orientales, 20), Genève - Paris: Droz, 1984, p. 113 and 121.

<sup>10</sup> É. Puech, “Les inscriptions araméennes I et III de Sfiré: nouvelles lectures”, *Revue biblique* 89 (1982), p. 576-587, especially p. 576-583.

<sup>11</sup> É. Puech, “La racine ŠYṬ - ŠṬ en araméen et en hébreu. À propos de Sfiré I A 24, 1QH<sup>a</sup> III,30 et 36 (= XI,31 et 37) et Ézéchiél”, *Revue de Qumran* 11 (1982-1984), p. 367-378, especially p. 367-370.

<sup>12</sup> S. A. Kaufman, “Reflections on the Assyrian-Aramaic Bilingual from Tell Fakhariyeh”, *Maarav* 3/2 (1982), p. 137-175, especially p. 172.

<sup>13</sup> H. Sader, *Les états araméens de Syrie depuis leur fondation jusqu’à leur transformation en provinces assyriennes* (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 36), Beirut: in Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1987, p. 121 and 128-129.

- Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J. N. Lawrence: ושבע בכתה יהכן “and (if) 7 hens (?) go seeking food, — may they kill nothing!”<sup>14</sup>

This list is not exhaustive, but sketches the variety of interpretations of the sentence in Sefire I A, 24 that have been proposed since the discovery of the inscriptions. Such a high number of readings points to the fact that it is difficult to find a satisfactory solution for how to interpret some words of the sentence. There is no consensus about the reading and meaning of בכִּנְתָּה. These different interpretations of בכִּנְתָּה appear to have caused various interpretations of the remainder of the sentence. In the text that follows, we propose a new reading and interpret it in the context of the ancient texts.

## 2. Reading of the curse in Sefire I A, 24

### בכִּנְתָּה

The list of translations indicates that interpretations of בכִּנְתָּה mostly varied between “his hens” (בכתה) and “his daughters” (בנותה), supplemented by others such as בכתה “she-camels”; אפתה or דגנתה “his woman bakers”. It is useful to examine what can actually be observed in the inscription (figs. 1 and 2).

<sup>14</sup> K. A. Kitchen and P. J. N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East. Part 1: The Texts*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012, p. 920-921.

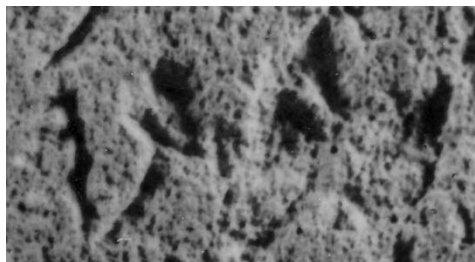


Fig. 1. Photograph published by A. Dupont-Sommer and J. Starcky, cabinet of the *Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum*, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres



Fig. 2. Photograph of the squeeze by Jan Dušek

Upon examination of the photographs and squeezes of the inscription, we understand why the reading of a *nun* could have been proposed. The reading בנתה “his daughters” may make sense, but the reading of a *kaf* instead of a *nun* is much more likely from an epigraphic point of view. The supposed *nun* would be higher than the other letters in the word, and its head would have an unusual form (𐤊 instead of 𐤍).

We see a *bet* as the first letter of the word in the curse. This *bet* is followed by a *kaf*. The right-hand portion of its head is slightly damaged, but its left part is well visible both on the photograph and the squeeze. The element that made this confusion with a *nun* possible is a kind of “circumflex” carved in the stone above the *kaf*. This circumflex extends to the head of the *kaf*. A very similar sign of a circumflex is visible above the *taw* in Sefire II C, 12. Is it a mark of a scribal correction? This is not yet clear, but the letter in question can be transcribed as a *kaf* with a circumflex above it.

The other two letters in the word are a *taw* and a *he*. Our reading of the whole word is בִּתְה (fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Drawing of בכתה in Sefire I A, 24

The reading בנתה would seem to have been defended because of the absence of a satisfactory interpretation of בכתה. Now, having excluded בנתה on epigraphic grounds, we must ask for the meaning of בכתה. This word with the meaning “hen” is unattested in Old and Official Aramaic. Dupont-Sommer<sup>15</sup> derived its meaning from later Aramaic אבכה and Syriac ܚܚ “cock”,<sup>16</sup> with the feminine form ܚܚܐ “hen” in Syriac. The translation “his hens” that usually appears in the editions of the Sefire inscriptions does not seem to make sense, particularly with regard to the verb יהרגן at the end of the sentence, with its meaning derived from the obvious הרג “to kill” or רגג “to desire”. As for הרג “to kill”, the hens are not birds of prey; they do not need to kill other animals in order to eat. The verb רגג “to desire” in combination with “hens” simply makes no sense.

בכתה may be compared with the Syriac ܚܚܐ “weaving woman” or ܚܚܐ “female lamenter”. Nevertheless, in our view the most credible explanation of the term has been proposed by Vermondo Brugnatelli.<sup>17</sup> He defined the meaning of בכתה in Sefire I A, 24 as “an absolute plural form of a noun \*bakt-a(h) ‘woman’, which would be an antecedent of today’s most widespread term for ‘woman’ in the Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects, namely *baxta* (BKT’, pl. *baxtâte*)”.<sup>18</sup> Cf. also Neo-Syriac ܚܚܐ “women” men-

<sup>15</sup> Dupont-Sommer, “Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré”, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>16</sup> M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, New York: The Judaica Press, 1996, p. 6; M. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon. A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann’s Lexicon Syriacum*, Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns; Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2009, p. 151.

<sup>17</sup> V. Brugnatelli, “The ‘Chickens’ of Sefire”, *Henoch* 17 (1995), p. 259–266.

<sup>18</sup> Brugnatelli, “The ‘Chickens’”, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

tioned by Payne-Smith.<sup>19</sup> According to Brugnatelli, the *he* at the end of בכתה is consistent with another two words in the curses that are in plural because at least one of them follows the number “seven”, both are connected with a verb in plural and both end with a *he*, exactly as בכתה.<sup>20</sup> These feminine plural nouns are ססיה “mares” (Sefire I A, 22) and שורה “cows” (Sefire I A, 23). These nouns ססיה and שורה are neither collective nouns nor internal plural nouns, but real feminine plural nouns, as Brugnatelli sufficiently proved.<sup>21</sup>

## יהכנ

The interpretations of Sefire I A, 24 summarized in the beginning of this article demonstrate that the verb יהכנ has almost unanimously been interpreted by various scholars as being derived from the root הלך\הוד “to go”, related to the Ethiopic *hōka* according to Fitzmyer.<sup>22</sup> This same verbal form יהכנ is attested in Sefire III, 5 with the meaning “they will go”. The same meaning may also be understood here in Sefire I A, 24. Nevertheless, because of the uncertain meaning of other words in the sentence, we can attempt to seek another interpretation of the word.

<sup>19</sup> R. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1999 (reprint of Oxford University Press, 1902), p. 45, s.v. **ܚܚܐ**.

<sup>20</sup> See Brugnatelli, “The ‘Chickens’”, *op. cit.*, p. 263-264. ססיה is preceded in line 22 by the number “seven”. This number can be reconstructed in the end of line 22, before שורה.

<sup>21</sup> For the analysis of these feminine plural forms, see V. Brugnatelli, “The ‘Feminine’ Plurals in Old Aramaic: New Light from Tell Fekherye”, in H. G. Mukarovsky (ed.), *Proceedings of the Fifth International Hamito-Semitic Congress*, Band 2: *Cushitic, Egyptian, Omotic, Semitic* (Veröffentlichungen der Institute für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie der Universität Wien, 57; Beiträge zur Afrikanistik, 41), Wien: Afro-Pub, 1991, p. 167-184. The interpretation of these words ססיה and שורה as broken plurals by Lipiński is not convincing; see E. Lipiński, “Aramaic Broken Plurals in the Wider Semitic Context”, in H. Gzella and M. L. Folmer (ed.), *Aramaic in its Historical and Linguistic Settings* (Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission, 50), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008, p. 27-40, especially p. 32-34. Lipiński ignores Brugnatelli’s studies on this topic.

<sup>22</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

We propose to consider the verb יהכן as derived from the root נכי “to beat, hit”, in impf. *Haph’el* 3rd pers. f. pl. The verb נכי in a causative stem is so far unattested in Old Aramaic. It exists in Syriac (“to injure, wound, harm”)<sup>23</sup> and is also attested in Biblical Hebrew (“to strike, smite”).<sup>24</sup> The verb נכי in *pe’al* is attested twice in Sefire III, 12-13. In one instance it is in a phrase with the instrumental preposition –ב as follows: נכה תפ(ל)נה בחרב “you must strike it with a sword”.<sup>25</sup> Here, in Sefire I A, 24, we have a comparable phrase with the instrumental preposition: יהכן בשט “they will beat with a šṭ”.

## שט

The translations in the beginning of this article show that שט has most often been understood as an infinitive *pe’al* of שוט without the preformative *mem*; the supposed meaning of the phrase בשט לחם being “in search of food”.<sup>26</sup> This root is unattested in Old Aramaic, it appears only in much later texts in Jewish Aramaic and in Biblical Hebrew.<sup>27</sup> In Sefire I A, 24 it is often translated “to seek, search”, but the meaning of שוט in Jewish Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew is “to rove about, roam”, “to move around”. It is not the same. For this reason we shall seek an alternative solution.

If our interpretation of the verb יהכן is correct, שט should be an instrument used for beating. The substantive שט may correspond to שוט “whip, scourge”, which is well attested in later

<sup>23</sup> Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon*, op. cit., p. 918.

<sup>24</sup> L. Koehler and W. Baumgarten, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Study Edition. Vol. 1, Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2001, p. 697.

<sup>25</sup> For this reading in Sefire III, 12-13, see É. Puech, “Les inscriptions araméennes I et III de Sfiré: nouvelles lectures”, *Revue biblique* 89 (1982), p. 576-587, especially p. 584-586.

<sup>26</sup> Dupont-Sommer, “Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré”, op. cit., p. 236-237; Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions*, op. cit., p. 83. This interpretation was adopted by many others.

<sup>27</sup> M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*, Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press; Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 1116; Koehler-Baumgarten, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 1439-1440.



phases of Aramaic.<sup>28</sup> The meaning “rod” appears to be attested for this substantive as well.<sup>29</sup> שט may also be compared with שוטיחא “branch”.<sup>30</sup> It is possible that שט in the Sefire inscription denoted an object that served for beating. Thus we propose to translate שט in Sefire I A, 24 as “scourge”. Then the meaning of the phrase שט יהבן בשט would be “they will beat with a scourge”.

## לחם

The word לחם is difficult to explain in this context of “beating with a scourge”. Its meaning, judged on the basis of its context, appears to be related to the object of the beating; an object that was beaten by the scourge. לחם can be considered to be a form of Akkadian *hīlammu* “locust”,<sup>31</sup> written here in Aramaic with a metathesis of *het* and *lamed*: לחם. A similar case of an insect, whose name appears in the Aramaic text of the Sefire inscription in a metathesized form, is קמל in Sefire I A, 31. Hayim Tawil analyzed קמל in the Sefire inscription as a metathesized form of Akkadian *kalmatu* (“parasite, louse”) denoting in the Aramaic text “a moth of the clothes”.<sup>32</sup> Fitzmyer interpreted this קמל as a metathesized form of Aramaic קלמתא and Syriac ܩܠܡܬܐ.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon*, op. cit., p. 1524; idem, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Dictionaries of Talmud, Midrash and Targum, 2), Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990, p. 540; idem, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, op. cit., p. 1116-1117.

<sup>29</sup> Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, op. cit., p. 1531.

<sup>30</sup> Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, op. cit., p. 1532; Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, op. cit., p. 1117.

<sup>31</sup> CAD 6: H, p. 184.

<sup>32</sup> H. Tawil, “A Curse concerning Crop-Consuming Insects in the Sefire Treaty and in Akkadian: A New Interpretation”, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 225 (1977), p. 59-62.

<sup>33</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions*, op. cit., p. 88.

## ואל יהרגן

From the epigraphic point of view, the verb in the end of the sentence may be read יהרגן or יהדגן. The verb יהרגן as an impf. 3rd pers. pl. f. *pe'al* of הרג “to kill” makes sense in our context. In fact, this verb is in perfect accordance with the first part of the sentence, as it results from our interpretation: some women beat something (a locust?) with an instrument (a scourge?), but they are not able to kill it.

### 3. Interpretation of the curse

The interpretation of some words of the curse in Sefire I A, 24 is hypothetical, because these terms are not attested in other Old Aramaic texts. Given the nature of the available sources for the 9th and 8th centuries BCE, our knowledge of Old Aramaic vocabulary is very limited. For this reason we must look for answers to our questions in other dictionaries, especially those of later phases of Aramaic. From this point of view, we use the same method as those who explained the sentence in question in previous studies listed in the beginning of this article.

Our transcription of the sentence in Sefire I A, 24 is ושבִּע בַּתָּהּ יִהְיֶה בִּשְׁלֹחַ וְאֵל יִהְרֹגָן. Our translation of the whole sentence is: “and may seven women beat with a scourge the locust and they shall not kill!” Figures 4 and 5 depict the detail of the inscription with the curse in Sefire I A, 24.



Fig. 4. Photograph published by A. Dupont-Sommer and J. Starcky, cabinet of the Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres

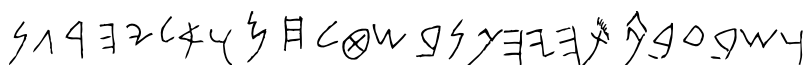


Fig. 5. Drawing of Sefire I A, 24 (J. Dušek)

Such a curse is so far unattested in the Old Aramaic or other contemporary North-West Semitic inscriptions. Nevertheless, the devastating effect of the swarms of locusts are well documented in the texts of the ancient Orient as well as in later periods.<sup>34</sup> The locusts could have been chased away by making noise. A. Daudet reported a description of the arrival of the locusts to a farm in Algeria, when the people at the farm made noise by beating with whips, rods and other metal tools on metal objects in order to prevent the flying locusts from descending from the air.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the aim of the activity described in Sefire I A, 24 does not seem to be to scare away the locusts, but to kill them (the verb הרג “to kill” is used).

Killing the locusts is well attested in the Neo-Assyrian period in the correspondence of Sargon II,<sup>36</sup> but the texts do not contain any description of this activity. A description of the fight against the locusts is reported for an older period in the texts from Mari. According to these texts, the devastating effect of the locusts

<sup>34</sup> E.g. W. Heimpel, “Moroccan Locusts in Qaṭṭunan”, *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 90 (1996), p. 101-120; K. Radner, “Fressen und gefressen werden. Heuschrecken als Katastrophe und Delikatesse im Alten Vorderen Orient”, *Die Welt des Orients* 34 (2004), p. 7-22; R. C. Jennings, “The Origin of the Locust Problem in Cyprus”, *Byzantion* 58 (1987), p. 315-325. In the Hebrew Bible the swarms of locusts represent one of the ten plagues of Egypt (Exod 10, 1-20).

<sup>35</sup> “Tout à coup, à la porte-fenêtre fermée pour nous garantir de la chaleur du jardin en fournaise, de grands cris retentirent : Les criquets ! les criquets ! (...) Pendant dix minutes, ce fut dans l'habitation, si calme, tout à l'heure, un bruit de pas précipités, de voix indistinctes, perdues dans l'agitation d'un réveil. De l'ombre des vestibules où ils étaient endormis, les serviteurs s'élancèrent dehors en faisant résonner avec des bâtons, des fourches, des fléaux, tous les ustensiles de métal qui leur tombaient sous la main, des chaudrons de cuivre, des bassines, des casseroles. Les bergers soufflaient dans leurs trompes de pâturage. D'autres avaient des conques marines, des cors de chasse. Cela faisait un vacarme effrayant, discordant, que dominaient d'une note suraiguë les you ! you ! you ! des femmes arabes accourues d'un douar voisin. Souvent, paraît-il, il suffit d'un grand bruit, d'un frémissement sonore de l'air, pour éloigner les sauterelles, les empêcher de descendre. (...)” The story of A. Daudet (*Lettres de mon moulin*, XXI, Paris, 1884, p. 333-335) is reported by H. Lesêtre, “Sauterelle”, in F. Vigouroux et al., *Dictionnaire de la Bible* 5/2: S-Z Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1928, col. 1513-1514.

<sup>36</sup> S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part 1: Letters from Assyria and the West* (State Archives of Assyria, 1), Helsinki: University Press, 1987, letters no. 104 (p. 87) and 221 (p. 170), cf. also no. 103 (p. 86).

could have been eliminated by different means. The locusts could have been stopped by rivers that represented an obstacle for the insect, they could have been killed or repelled, or the harvest could have been accelerated.<sup>37</sup> As for killing the locusts in the texts from Mari, B. Lion and C. Michel mention verbs related to this activity: *maḥāšu* and *kabāsu*.<sup>38</sup> The second verb, *kabāsu* “to step into something, trample, crush, etc.”,<sup>39</sup> relates to the cattle who crushed the locusts by stepping on the insect. The verb *maḥāšu* is used in the texts describing the situation when all people of the district were called to fight against the locusts. Lion with Michel give the following translation:<sup>40</sup>

“J’ai donc alerté tout le district, réquisitionné jusqu’aux femmes et aux enfants des deux sexes, et tué (*maḥāšu*) tant que j’ai pu.” (ARMT XXVII, 28: 18-22).

“Je suis parti avec tout le petit peuple, les bœufs et les moutons et, face aux criquets, je me poste comme je le fais constamment ; je tue (*maḥāšu*) tant que je peux” (ARMT XXVII, 29: 13-18).

The verb *maḥāšu*, used in these two texts from Mari in relation to the liquidation of the locusts, means “to hit, strike”, but also “to wound, kill; to smash, demolish, etc.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, beating the locust also means its killing, its crushing, because the Assyrian verb has both meanings: it is killing by hitting, thus, crushing. In this light, the sense of the Aramaic curse in Sefire I A, 24 becomes apparent. The Aramaic text uses the verb נָכַי “to hit”, but this hitting is not followed by the death of the beaten locust: וְאֵל יִהְיֶה ... יִהְיֶה “they will beat ..., but they shall not kill”. According to the Aramaic text, the locust is beaten in order to be crushed, but it is impossible to kill it. Thus, it is an activity that normally should lead to a desired

<sup>37</sup> B. Lion and C. Michel, “Criquets et autres insectes à Mari”, *Mari : Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires* 8 (1997), p. 707-724, especially p. 713-716.

<sup>38</sup> Lion and Michel, “Criquets et autres insectes à Mari”, *op. cit.*, p. 714-715.

<sup>39</sup> CAD 8: K, p. 5-11.

<sup>40</sup> Lion and Michel, “Criquets et autres insectes à Mari”, *op. cit.*, p. 714-715, note 29.

<sup>41</sup> CAD 10: M/1, p. 71-84.

result, but does not. This curse very well fits the context of the preceding curses in Sefire I A, 21-24 that reflect the same schema.

The curses preceding the locust curse in Sefire I A, 21-24 concern the themes of the conception of a new life and its preservation by sustenance. According to the Aramaic text, all these activities are affected by the curse, thus implicitly resulting in the death. We quote Fitzmyer's translation of these curses:

“[... and should seven rams cover] a ewe, may she not conceive; and should seven [nurses] anoint [their breasts and] nurse a young boy, may he not have his fill; and should seven mares suckle a colt, may it not be sa[ted]; and should seven] cows give suck to a calf, may it not have its fill; and should seven ewes suckle a lamb, [may it not be sa]ted”.<sup>42</sup>

The locusts destroy the crop and other plants, so, they harm to the production of food. Their swarms must be killed in order to protect the crop. But if they are not killed, they devastate the crop, thus preventing the production of food and implying death. In this sense, the locust curse in Sefire I A, 21-24 fits this context very well. Moreover, the destruction of the vegetation of Arpad by insects is explicitly mentioned in the next section of curses in Sefire I A, 25-35, dominated in lines 27-32 by the theme of the destruction of Arpad by devouring insect pests and other animals. Thus, thematically, the curse in Sefire I A, 24 concerning the killing of locusts *concludes* the section of curses in Sefire I A, 21-24, and, at the same time, *prefigures* the next section of curses in Sefire I A, 25-35.

<sup>42</sup> Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, op. cit., p. 45.

# The Meaning of *asherah* in Hebrew Inscriptions

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**Résumé.** La présente étude offre une nouvelle interprétation du terme *ashéra* dans les inscriptions de Kuntillet 'Ajrud et de Khirbet el-Qom, justifiée sur le plan méthodologique et plus plausible sur le plan historique au regard de nos connaissances actuelles sur le contexte culturel de l'ancien Israël-Juda. Dans la mesure où *ashéra* désigne probablement à une divinité féminine et où le terme est doté d'un pronom suffixe, il pourrait s'agir d'un nom commun jusqu'alors inconnu désignant la parèdre de Yhwh, laquelle serait distincte de la déesse *Ashéra*.

Over the years, the inscriptions found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (KA) and Khirbet el-Qom (KQ) that mention an *asherah* in association with the god YHWH have attracted a staggering amount of discussion, and when considered as a whole, what is most striking about this scholarly discourse is the degree to which it has been marked by persistent and wide divergence over the meaning of consonantal *ʾšrth* = אֲשֶׁרֶתָהּ. While the prospect that the term may constitute evidence that a female deity was worshiped alongside YHWH in ancient Israel-Judah has been generally acknowledged, the question of whether it refers directly to a goddess has been hotly disputed, with not a few arguing that an object of some kind rather than a deity is in view.

As a result, until now, no scholarly analysis has been able to catalyze anything approaching a consensus on the subject of YHWH's *asherah*; instead interpretations have proliferated and alternative theories have been proposed, so that today several competing approaches to understanding *ʾšrth* exist, each one viewing the evidence significantly different from the others. At this juncture it may be helpful to step back and freshly examine the issue without loyalty to any preexisting theory. Simply run-

ning in one of the tracks that has gone before is not likely to break the current interpretive impasse. What we need is a new approach that seeks to incorporate a greater range of data and evaluates prior theories with regard to both their insights and their methodological deficiencies.

Furthermore, it would seem that the time is ripe for such an analysis. With the publication of the final excavation report of KA, we are now in a much better position to make informed judgments about the inscriptions found there and their relationship to the immediate epigraphic, iconographic, and material context. The readings at least of the inscriptions that mention YHWH and *ʾšrth* are for the most part well understood and epigraphically confirmed (Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012: 73-142), while interpretations of the historical background and function of the site have coalesced around a minimum consensus that it originated as a royal Israelite outpost on the 'Ghazza Road' trade route and that at least part of the complex included dedicated cultic space (e.g. Mandell 2012: 131-162). At the same time, our ability to situate the inscriptions and other cultural phenomena in ancient Israel-Judah within the broader landscape of the eastern Mediterranean/Levant has developed considerably in recent decades. Reconstructions of Israelite-Judahite religion have gradually become more rigorous in their application of historical methodology, which in practice has meant less bibliocentrism and more dependence on what can be readily identified as primary sources of information, while various disciplines and fields of study on regions and cultures geographically and temporally proximate to Israel-Judah have made independent progress, allowing for more refined cross-cultural comparative analysis.

The following study aims to take advantage of this state of affairs by reexamining inscriptional *ʾšrth* in order to critically assess previous scholarship on the issue and advance an interpretation that is not only methodologically defensible but historically more plausible given our present knowledge of the cultural context of ancient Israel-Judah. I will begin by laying out my reading of the relevant inscriptions and then move to a consideration of the divine status of Hebrew *ʾšrth* as a necessary preliminary to the interpretive process of elucidating the meaning of the term. As

we will see, if it can be established that *ʾšrth* refers to a divine entity, then this will have important implications for the possible range of semantic nuances that we may consider attributing to it. From here, we will then survey the three main interpretations of *ʾšrth* operative in current scholarship that assume the word/expression denotes a female deity. By carefully examining each of these proposals, we will be able to eliminate some readings of *ʾšrth* as historically doubtful and build on others as a means of proposing the hypothesis that the term *asherah* was a common noun used in Israel-Judah to designate the female partner of YHWH.

### The inscriptions

*brkt. ʾtkm.*

*lyhwh. šmrn. wlʾšrth.*<sup>1</sup>

“I bless you to YHWH of Samaria and to his *asherah*”

*brktk ly*

*hwh tmn*

*wlʾšrth. yb*

*rk. wyšmrk*

*wywy ʿm. ʾdn*

*yl*<sup>2</sup>

“I bless you to YHWH of Teman and to his *asherah*. May he bless and protect you and may he continue with my lord”

*]lyhwh htmn. wlʾšrth.*

*]kl ʾšr. yšʾl. [mʾšʾ?]. ḥnn hʾ wʾm pth wntn lh yhw klbbh.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Inscription 3.1, Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel (2012: 87-91). Cf. Renz (1995a: 61); Zevit (2001: 390-392); Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005: 289-292); Naʾaman (2011: 302).

<sup>2</sup> Inscription 3.6, Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel (2012: 95-97). Cf. Renz (1995a: 62); Zevit (2001: 394-397); Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005: 293-294); Naʾaman (2011: 303).

<sup>3</sup> Inscription 3.9, Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel (2012: 98-100). Cf. Renz (1995a: 64); Zevit (2001: 398-400); Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005: 295-297); Naʾaman (2011: 306); Blum (2013: 44-47).



“to YHWH of Teman and to his *asherah*[...] all that he asks (from YHWH?), he is generous, and if he entreats, then YHWH will give to him according to his wishes”<sup>4</sup>

[y]ʾrk. ymm. wyšbʿw[...] ytnw. l[y]hwh[.] tymn. wlʾšrth[  
]. hyṭb. yhwh. hty[mn...]y. hyṭb. ym[m<sup>5</sup>

“he will lengthen their days and they will be filled and they will give to YHWH of Teman and his *asherah*[...] do good, YHWH of Teman[...] make their days good”

brkt ʾryhw lyhwh  
wmšryh lʾšrth hwšʿ lh

lʾbyhw

wlʾšrth

[wlʾšrth]<sup>6</sup>

“Blessed be Uriyahu to YHWH and to his *asherah*, save him from his enemies... to Abiyahu... and to his *asherah*... and to his *asherah*”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel read *kl ʾšr. yšʾl. mʾš. ḥnn hʾ* “all that he requests from a man, that man will give him generously.” But from the photos it is difficult to make out what follows *yšʾl*. (cf. McCarter 2003b: 172, n. 3), and *ḥnn hʾ* means “he is gracious,” not “he will give” (Naʾaman 2011: 307). Also, the sense of the line yielded by this reading is unsatisfactory. First, based on the mythopoetic focus and cultic function of the inscriptions at KA, it seems doubtful that an Israelite receiving something from an unspecified gracious man would be the subject of this short verse. Second, line 2 shows evidence of parallelism with the occurrence of “ask”/“entreat” and “gracious”/“give.” Because the adjective “gracious” is prominently associated with YHWH in the Bible (e.g. Ex. 34:5; Ps. 116:5), a more plausible reading is that *ḥnn hʾ* “he is gracious” refers to YHWH as the one who responds to requests.

<sup>5</sup> Inscription 4.1.1, Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel (2012: 105-107). Cf. Renz (1995a: 58); Zevit (2001: 373-374); Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005: 285-286); Naʾaman (2011: 308-09).

<sup>6</sup> Inscription from KQ, cf. Renz (1995a: 207-210); Zevit (2001: 359-70); Dobbs-Allsopp et al. (2005: 408-414); Aḥituv (2008: 220-224).

<sup>7</sup> I assume that the placement of *mšryh* after the coordinating *waw* and before *lʾšrth* is a poetic breakup of a stereotyped phrase, and therefore that *asherah* functions as a second object in the blessing formula. Cf. Hadley (2000: 96-100); Naveh (2001: 194-97); Aḥituv (2008: 221-224); Renz (2009: 22-25).

## The divine status of YHWH's *asherah*

When approaching the conundrum of *ʾšrth*, the first question we face is methodological: How do we go about interpreting a word in inscriptions whose meaning is uncertain and that appears in an expression for which no precise parallel exists elsewhere in Hebrew? Understandably enough, the standard approach has been to accept a straightforward analysis of *ʾšrth* as the feminine noun *ʾšrt* with an attached pronominal suffix *-h*, and then to establish the term's meaning from the vantage point of the known lexical-semantic values of *asherah* in other NWS texts. Because *asherah* is clearly attested as the proper name of a major Levantine goddess, a heterodox cult object in the Bible, and a shrine or cult place, each meaning is typically considered in turn and assessed as to which is most amenable to the inscriptional and religio-historical context with arguments advanced in favor of one or the other.

However, this philological "either/or" approach is unsatisfactory insofar as it treats the process of interpreting inscriptional *ʾšrth* in a rather mechanistic fashion, as if it were merely a matter of weighing and choosing among several well-defined possibilities. By focusing chiefly on *asherah* as proper name and *asherah* as cult object/shrine, the analysis fails to observe that the interpretive options are not only highly incommensurate one to another (divine/non-divine), stem from divergent ideological and cultural contexts (ancient inscription/traditional religious text), and may provide an incomplete picture of the semantic range of the term *asherah* as it was used in monarchic Israel-Judah, but also that the process of elimination that this approach entails invariably results in a distortion of the underlying evidence, so that some data are ignored or suppressed while other aspects are foregrounded and treated as decisive. For example, the interpretation of *ʾšrt* as a reference to the goddess Asherah can account for evidence that the inscription has in view a female deity paired with YHWH as an object of blessing, but at the same time is unable to explain the significance of the attached pronominal suffix, while the interpretation of *ʾšrt* as a cult object/shrine belonging to YHWH re-

solves the pronominal suffix and yet downplays evidence that the blessing is directed to a deity.

Methodologically, it would seem wise therefore to try to separate the issue of determining the divine status of *ʾšrth* from clarifying the precise meaning of the expression. Different and largely independent evidence bears on each question, requiring that the indications *ʾšrth* is a deity be given full consideration without feeling the need to prejudge the issue by fitting the term into a particular lexical-semantic slot. If it can be decided that *ʾšrt* refers to a deity on independent grounds, then this will provide a more reliable basis from which to theorize and speculate about its possible meaning.

With these prefatory remarks in mind, we can begin by pointing out that the argument in favor of interpreting *ʾšrth* as a deity is in fact functional in nature and has fairly little to do with the lexical-semantic value of the term *asherah* as used in other NWS texts. The argument combines a number of factors both internal and external to the inscriptions, which can be listed by order of importance:

1) In the context of the inscriptions, *ʾšrth* is invoked parallel with YHWH as an independent object of blessing. The parallelism is marked syntactically by the *l-* attached to both YHWH and *ʾšrth* and by the coordinating *w-* that separates them.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of the presence of a possible suffix on *ʾšrt*, the syntax of the blessing implies that YHWH and *ʾšrth* are corresponding divine entities (Dever 1984: 30; Müller 1992: 28; Frevel 1995: 20-21; Köckert 1998: 165; Miller 2000: 36; Zevit 2001: 404; Irsigler 2011: 142; Mandell 2012: 140).

2) In comparable blessings from the broader region, only deities are named as objects of the formula *brk l-*: e.g. *brktk lyhwh* “I bless you to YHWH” (Arad); *whbrktk lqws* “I bless you to Qws” (Ḥorvat Uza); *brktk lbʿl špn wkl ʾl thpnhs* “I bless you to Baal Zaphon and to all the gods of Tachpanchas” (Saqqara); *brtky lptḥ* “I bless you to Ptah” (Hermopolis); *brktk lyhh wlḥnb* “I bless you to YHWH and to Khnum” (Elephantine) (Margalit 1990: 276; Müller 1992: 28;

<sup>8</sup> On the significance of the preposition *l-* before a divine name, cf. Pardee (1976: 223); Renz (1995: 30); Jenni (2000: 77); Parker (2006: 89-90).

Pardee 1995: 302; 2005: 282; Frevel 1995: 20-21; Tropper 2001: 101; Zevit 2001: 404; Rösel 2003: 107-121; Leuenberger 2008: 121 n. 35).

3) As a number of scholars have opined, inscription 3.1 on pithos A is linked to an illustration of what appears to be YHWH and his consort (Gilula 1979: 129-137; Margalit 1990: 274-278; Coogan 1987: 119; 2010: 169-170; Schmidt 1995: 96-102; 2002: 107-108; Zevit 2001: 381-389; McCarter 2003a: 171; Mandell 2012: 136-137; cf. Uehlinger 1997: 142-146; Hadley 2000: 136-144; Beck 2012; Ornan 2016: 20; Schmidt 2016). Although many following Beck's initial study of the iconography of KA have rejected any direct correlation of text and imagery, Thomas has recently offered a re-assessment of the pithos imagery that supports identifying the Bes-like figures with YHWH and his female partner (2016).

4) The immediate archaeological context of the inscriptions at KA was evidently polytheistic. The divine name Baal is attested in at least two separate inscriptions, and El and "Name of El" are mentioned in a mythological context in a plaster wall inscription from the bench room (4.2; 4.4.1; cf. Dijkstra 2001a: 24; Zevit 2001: 374, 404, 437; Mastin 2011: 81-82; Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012: 133; Mandell 2012: 138; Schmidt 2016: 90-94).

5) There is growing evidence for the worship of female deities in Iron Age Israel-Judah, including widespread use of terracotta female figurines, cultic dualism in the form of standing stones, and other pictorial imagery, such as an incised image of a god and goddess pair recovered from eighth-century Jerusalem (Kletter 1996; 2002; Uehlinger 1997; Köckert 1998; Keel and Uehlinger 1998; Johnston 2003; Dever 2005; 2014; Albertz 2008; Gilmour 2009; 2015; Bloch-Smith 2014; 2016; Römer 2015; L. Levine 2016; cf. Schmitt 2012; Darby 2014; Stavrakopoulou 2016).

6) The substantive *asherah* is often associated with female divinity in NWS, including in the HB (Day 1986: 385-408; 2002: 42-48; Wyatt 1999: 99-105; Merlo 2009a: 975-980).

In line with these various considerations, scholarly acceptance that *asherah* refers to a deity in the context of the inscriptions is much broader and more widely held than ideas about what *ʾšrth* means in particular or how the name should be analyzed. As we will see later, some scholars take *ʾšrth* to be the proper name

Asherah with an attached suffix, others that the *-h* is integral to the spelling of the divine name, and still others that the construction refers to a common noun *asherah* meaning “goddess” or “consort.”

The main alternatives to interpreting  $\text{ʔšrth}$  as a deity is to assume that it refers to a cult object or shrine connected to YHWH. This line of thinking takes its point of departure from the fact that the *h-* on  $\text{ʔšrth}$  is most easily analyzed as a pronominal suffix with YHWH as the antecedent; therefore as a declined substantive  $\text{ʔšrt}$  must represent a common noun. According to the syntactic context,  $\text{ʔšrt}$  cannot refer to the goddess Asherah but must signify something else.

The cognate to inscriptional  $\text{ʔšrt}$  is frequently attested in the HB as a wooden cult object connected to heterodox Israelite worship, namely the *asherah* (e.g. Ex 34:13; Deut 7:5; 12:3; 16:21). So for those who see the application of a suffix as militating against a reference to Asherah, the general tendency has been to resolve the problem of inscriptional *asherah* by recourse to known Hebrew usage. The *asherah* is a wooden cult object of some kind; as a common noun this would explain why it is marked as a possession belonging to YHWH. The cult object theory has been advanced in various forms since the beginning of research on the inscriptions and was recently featured as the preferred interpretation of the final publication of the inscriptions from KA (Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012).<sup>9</sup> Based on one’s interpretation of the biblical evidence and reconstruction of the historical context, proponents of the theory diverge into those who see the cult object as a representation of the goddess Asherah, either non-anthropomorphic or anthropomorphic (Emerton 1982: 18; 1999: 335; Maier 1986: 169-173; Olyan 1988: 31-32; Ackerman 1992: 62-66; Hadley 2000: 105; Mayes 1997: 63-65; Jeremias and Hartenstein 1999: 115; Day 2002: 52-61; Sommer 2009: 45-46; Walls 2016: 275; cf. McCarter 1987; North 1989), and those who regard it as a non-anthropomorphic symbol connected to YHWH that need not have

<sup>9</sup> The cult object interpretation was first proposed by Lemaire (1977: 595-608) with reference to KQ, and soon thereafter was applied to the inscriptions from KA.

represented a female deity (Lemaire 1984: 42-51; Tigay 1986: 26-29; Koch 1988: 99-100; Wiggins 1993: 181; Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 228-232; Hadley 2000: 83; Smith 2002: 118-133; 2011; Mastin 2004: 326-351; Ahituv 2008: 221-224).

Starting from the same interpretive position that *ʾšrt* is not the proper name *Asherah*, some have more recently proposed that it means “shrine” or “sanctuary,” based on comparative epigraphic data that this was the word’s basic meaning in Phoenician, Aramaic, and Philistian of the first millennium (Cross 2009; Sass 2014; Puech 2015).

Yet both of these approaches to interpreting inscriptional *asherah* are open to critique on methodological and substantive grounds. First, by focusing on particular lexical-semantic values as a means of resolving the difficulty of the pronominal suffix, the analysis pays insufficient attention to what should be the primary context for determining the meaning of *ʾšrth*: the inscriptions themselves, and outside of that, the cultural and discourse world from which the inscriptions emerged. As was shown above, that context suggests rather unambiguously that *ʾšrth* is a deity. Several factors converge on this point, the most important being that *asherah* is treated on a par with YHWH and functions as a divine object of blessing.

Second, even if we were to accept the argument that the presence of the suffix militates against understanding *ʾšrth* as the proper name of the goddess *Asherah*, this grammatical feature cannot be used to exclude interpreting *ʾšrt* as a reference to a deity. Syntactically speaking, the pronominal suffix is strictly neutral on the question of the divine status of *asherah*. It tells us only that in mind of the speaker the entity *asherah* is sufficiently indeterminate, i.e. non-identifiable, to require it being specified for the linguistic-communicative context.<sup>10</sup>

Third, because the suffix does not by itself preclude interpreting *ʾšrth* as a deity, the main argument that the theory relies on to make the claim that the *asherah* is a non-divine entity is a lexical-semantic one: the *asherah* cult object meaning is attested in He-

<sup>10</sup> On determination and definiteness in Hebrew, see Barr (1989); *IBHS*: 235-252; *JM* §137; Bekins (2013).

brew and in a general way seems to fit the cultic setting. But this lexical-semantic argument is fundamentally inadequate for substantiating such a claim. Throughout modern research of the ANE, new or unknown deities are not primarily identified on this basis, i.e. whether their name conforms to some previously known divine nomenclature, but rather by their function and whether they are treated as divine by those who regarded them as such.<sup>11</sup> In other words, we know a deity when we meet one because of the particular context in which it occurs, not because it bears a certain name. In addition, it is well known that the names and designations used for deities in many ANE cultures were highly variable in function and origin, embracing proper names, common noun titles, and nominal forms that otherwise denote non-divine objects or abstract concepts (e.g. Rahmouni 2008). So it is questionable to assume that just because a nominal form refers to a non-divine object in one context that it must do the same in another.

Fourth, the preserved canon of Hebrew scripture and the epigraphic use of *asherah* in other Canaanite languages are not necessarily a reliable lexical-semantic base from which to determine what range of meanings obtained for the term in the context of ancient Israel-Judah (Coogan 1987: 119; Xella 2001: 72-74; Sass 2014). On the one hand, while we cannot reject out of hand that the biblical understanding of *asherah* as cult icon is somehow related to the *asherah* of the inscriptions, neither can we automatically assume their equivalence. The HB is on the whole a much later document that took shape in an ideological and cultural setting far removed from the world of the inscriptions, namely, a rigorous monotheizing and aniconic form of Judaism that came to prominence during the Second Temple period (Schmid 2003; Edelman 2009; Niehr 2010; Kratz 2015; Römer 2015). Virtually all references to the *asherah* cult object occur in Dtr or Dtr-related literature, where it is portrayed as an illicit cult item and something that YHWH requires to be destroyed, whereas references to

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Porter (2009a); Kaizer (2013).

proper deities are few and far between.<sup>12</sup> It is thus doubtful whether the biblical understanding of *asherah* as essentially a material cult object preceded the construction of this literature and had always belonged to the cultic vocabulary of Israel-Judah, or was rather an innovation peculiar to the Dtr authors, reflecting their agenda to rhetorically delegitimize cult statuary (cf. Binger 1997: 138-141; Sass 2014).

Furthermore, the cult object understanding of *asherah* is not the only meaning of the term preserved in the Bible. As we will see later, there are actually several different senses attested, including *asherah* as the regular name of a goddess (e.g. 1 Kgs 15:13; 18:19; 2 Kgs 21:7), *asherah* as a class of female divinities (Jdgs 3:7), and *asherah* as an illicit cult object (e.g. Ex 34:13; Dt 7:5; 12:3; 16:21). As a consequence, even if we were to agree that biblical Hebrew could serve as a guide for interpreting inscriptional *asherah*, one would still have to explain why the cult object understanding of *asherah* fits the context better than other attested meanings.

On the other hand, the attestation of ʾšrt in other Canaanite languages of the first millennium is inconclusive. Because Asherah was no longer used as a divine name for a major goddess in Phoenicia and was superseded by Astarte, this does not mean that the same would have been the case in the central highlands of Israel-Judah (Schmidt 2016: 96; cf. Smith 2002: 130-131; 2011: 216). As is well known, the various national cultures in the southern Levant of the first millennium show a tendency to differentiate the names of their patron deities, each adopting local or regional divine nomenclature. Canaanite religion was characterized by diversity as well as broad diachronic and synchronic stability.

Not only would it have been possible for an Israelite-Judahite cult of Asherah to have perdured outside of Phoenicia, but we cannot assume that ʾšrt in the sense of “shrine/place” was general

<sup>12</sup> See Deut 7:5; 12:3; 16:21; Jdgs 3:7; 6:25, 26, 28, 30; 1 Kgs 14:15, 23; 15:13; 16:33; 18:19; 2 Kgs 13:6; 17:10, 16; 18:4; 21:3, 7; 23:4, 6, 7, 14, 15. Outside of the Dtr narrative, *asherah* occurs in Ex 34:13, a chapter commonly viewed as having strong Dtr connections, in some late literary/redactional (Dtr?) strata in prophetic narrative (Isa 17:8; 27:9; Jer 17:2; Mic 5:3), and in the synchronistic references in Chronicles.



to NWS during the first millennium. While it seems clear that this meaning was current in Phoenician, Philistian, and Aramaic, in the preserved literature of the HB, *ʾsrh* consistently refers to a divinity or cult icon but never a shrine or sanctuary (Römer 2016: 385-386). In addition, it is possible that *ʾsr(t)* in the sense of “shrine/place” and *ʾšrt* as divinity were not pronounced the same. Whereas the noun *ʾsr* was pronounced with a short *a* vowel after the second radical or was vowelless (*ʾašar/ʾašrat*), the name *ʾšrt* was vocalized with a short *i* vowel (*ʾašīrat*).<sup>13</sup> Sass’s suggestion that the interpretation of *ʾšrt* as shrine may find support in Hebrew personal names in which *ʾsr* functions as a theophoric falters on the basis that the epithet likely means “fortune” and is etymologically unrelated to the divine name Asherah.<sup>14</sup>

Fifth, an additional consideration thought to support the view that *asherah* is a non-divine entity is that all the continuations of the blessings in praise and prayer invoke only a singular masculine subject (3.6; 3.9; 4.1.1; KQ). For example, inscription 3.6 on Pithos B includes a prayer after the initial blessing in 3ms, “May he bless and protect you and may he continue with my lord.” The KQ inscription similarly ends with a prayer: “and from his enemies deliver (הושע) him!” with “deliver” in 2ms. From this, many have concluded that only YHWH is envisioned acting on behalf of the party who is blessed, rather than YHWH and *asherah* together. For example, Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel state: “The *asherah* is not incorporated into the blessings and prayers. The manner of use of the word אֲשֶׁרָה in these formulas does not support the notion that it refers to a goddess” (2012: 132). However, because YHWH is a major focus of the discourse surrounding the blessings proper, it does not follow that the *asherah* is non-divine or negate evidence that the term functions as a separate deity next to YHWH. If it were the case that the authors of the inscriptions thought only of

<sup>13</sup> For the spelling of Asherah, see Hess (1995: 211-213).

<sup>14</sup> In Middle Kingdom Egyptian, the sibilant of the NWS name element *ʾsr* is written with a *š* and not an *s*, which argues against deriving it from PS *ʾtr* (Albright 1954: 229-230, n. 51; Janzen 1965: 216). Further, in Ugaritic the form *išryt* “happiness” is distinguished from *atrt* “Asherah” (cf. Frevel 1995: 162, n. 447; DUL3: 15, 125).

YHWH as a source of blessing, then there would have been no need to mention the *asherah* with the *w-* and *l-* formulation.

In order to explain this feature of the inscriptions, it is worth keeping in mind that only male divine names appear in the other display and dedicatory inscriptions found at KA and KQ, for example, YHWH, El, and Baal.<sup>15</sup> In KA inscription 1.2, a dedication invokes the blessing of YHWH alone, without any mention of an *asherah*. Further, YHWH is the theophoric of choice in personal names at KA and KQ: out of ten theophoric names at KA at least nine feature *yw* and at KQ out of five theophoric names all five feature *yhw* (Heide 2002; Ahituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012: 128). These epigraphic discoveries align with the fact that personal names found in monarchic Israel-Judah have tended as a rule to contain only male theophoric elements, with forms of YHWH being the most common (Albertz 2012: 339-367). Very few personal names have been discovered that invoke a female deity, even though we can be confident that goddesses were commonly recognized based on iconographic and textual data.<sup>16</sup>

The focus on YHWH in praise and prayers in inscriptions therefore falls into a larger cultural pattern of spotlighting male deities, and particularly YHWH, in public expressions of worship. Considered from a socio-cultural perspective, this tendency is not at all surprising, since ancient Israelite-Judahite culture was patriarchal in the sense that women were typically subordinate to men in the public arena, and particularly to their husbands.<sup>17</sup> Assuming a homology between the divine and human world, it would make sense for YHWH to be treated as the dominant authority and active partner of a male-female pair, that is, the one

<sup>15</sup> For inscriptions found at or related to KQ, see Dever (1969-1970); Renz (1995a: 199-217); Ahituv (2008: 220-233).

<sup>16</sup> On the lack of correspondence between theophorics in personal names and the full gamut of deities worshiped in particular Levantine cultures, see Pardee (1988: 119-151); Hadley (2000: 79-80); Smith (2002: 4-5). For possible examples of references to female divinity in Hebrew personal names, see Albertz (2012: 363-367).

<sup>17</sup> For perspectives on Israel-Judah as a “patriarchal” society, cf. Meyers (2006; 2014); Knight (2011: 132); Lemos (2015); Brenner-Idan (2015: 64-66); Boer (2015: 81-109).

more than likely to be invoked and celebrated in public cult as the power that answered prayer and bestowed blessing on individuals in the community. Further illustration of the patriarchal conceptions underlying the focus on YHWH is reflected in other aspects of the inscriptions. The texts all follow a formula of placing YHWH as the initial object of blessing, with the geographical specification attached to him if there is one, and then the *asherah* linked to him through a 3ms suffix, the implication being that YHWH is primary and his *asherah* secondary. In addition, as Thomas (2016) has discussed, the image of YHWH and his consort on Pithos A itself portrays YHWH in preeminent position, staggered in front of his female partner and significantly taller and provided with a larger crown.

So if patriarchy helps clarify the prominence of YHWH in the inscriptions, why the abrupt shift from a male-female dualism to a masculine singular subject? Among those who accept that *asherah* refers to a deity, various explanations have been offered. Müller proposed that the blessing for general prosperity directed to YHWH and his *asherah* in inscription 3.6 should be functionally distinguished from the succeeding prayer for guidance and protection, which he sees as relevant only to a single personal god, namely YHWH (1992: 32). But it is difficult to see how the content of the invocations is all that different (e.g. *brkty/ybrk* in 3.6), and in any case, this explanation fails to reckon with the broader pattern of invocations of YHWH and his *asherah* followed by verbal content in the masculine singular. Others have assumed that the singular continuations demonstrate the subordination of the *asherah* to YHWH (Schmid 2003: 24-25, n. 50; Köckert 2005: 11; Jericke 2010: 170; Irsigler 2011: 143-145; Römer 2015: 166). But while the subordination of *asherah* to YHWH is certainly reflected in the phraseology of the inscriptions, this begs the question of why reference to the goddess disappears altogether.

Perhaps a step closer to the right track is Xella's explanation that "from the point of view of the history of religions, and from that specific to the Semitic tradition, it is quite normal that the main source of charisma (but not only!) is the male god and that from him thus emanates formally the power of blessing" (2001: 73). Because the blessings are directed to YHWH and his *asherah*

on an equal plane, we may even go further and infer that the 3ms continuations have in view YHWH and his *asherah* acting together as a compound entity, with the agency of the *asherah* having been subsumed into the male god's agency (cf. Köckert 1998: 166; Frevel 1995: 20-21; Schmid 2003: 24-25; Levine 2014: 178; Schmidt 2016: 95).

Furthermore, as recognized by Frevel (1995: 21), we have a fairly close parallel to the phraseology invoking YHWH and his *asherah* and then YHWH alone in Punic dedicatory inscriptions, which sometimes begin by invoking Baal Hammon and Tinnit together and then conclude with a formula in the 3ms, "To the Lord Baal Hammon and to our Lady Tinnit the Face of Baal... because he heard his voice, he blessed him" (KAI 102).<sup>18</sup> With regard to the ending formula, Emerton has expressed doubt that the reading "he blessed him" is correct, since the orthography of 3ms forms of the verb *brk* "to bless" is often indistinguishable from the plural (1999: 320-321). But according to Robert Kerr, the singular number of the verbs in the formula is shown by the Punic dedication in Greek script from El-Hofra (KAI 175;  $\sigma\alpha\mu\omega\ \kappa\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omega\ \beta\alpha\rho\alpha\chi\omega$ ) "that can only render 'he heard his voice, he blessed him' [and] is supported by the same formula translated into Greek in KAI 176; this is also supported by some vocalized neo-Punic spellings."<sup>19</sup> Thus, in the space of a single inscription, the divine object of dedication shifts from speaking about two separate male and female deities to an emphasis on the masculine principle only, as though the latter were corresponding to or inclusive of the former. Interestingly, Kerr's explanation for the shift to the masculine singular is that Tinnit "when mentioned in such texts is invariably denoted as the /fané bâl/ or literally 'the face of Bal' and not as a [completely] independent entity. Tinnit is thus an aspect of 'Bal (H)Ammon'."

From this comparative context, it is fairly easy to see how "YHWH and his *asherah*" functions as an integral unit. On the as-

<sup>18</sup> See also KAI 104; 105; 175; Constantine N42; Tirekbine N1. The singular emphasis on Baal in Punic dedications has been noted by Garbati (2013: 530); Amadasi Guzzo and López (2012-2013: 176 n. 80).

<sup>19</sup> Personal communication, Dec. 28, 2013.

sumption that ʾšrth consists of ʾšrt + -h masculine suffix, the *asherah* is linked directly to her male partner as an entity subordinate to him, comparable to the linkage of Tinnit to Baal through the epithet “Face of Baal.” By associating the *asherah* to YHWH in this manner, not only is YHWH’s agency and authority over the *asherah* emphasized, but the two are portrayed as closely interrelated, making independent female agency susceptible to being expressed as integral to YHWH. If this interpretation is correct, then it would mean that when an individual blessed another person to “YHWH and his *asherah*” and then continued with prayers in the masculine singular, it was not a case that the agency of the female deity was seen as non-existent or ineffectual, but rather that she was implicitly assumed to have a contributory role in the matter and regarded as somehow inseparable from YHWH.

The last criticism of the cult object theory is that it assumes that a blessing by a deity’s cult object, as distinct from the deity, was conceivable in the context of the ANE. That is to say, according to this view, *asherah* was understood to be essentially the name of a cult emblem, whether it belonged to Asherah or YHWH. But, as has been repeatedly pointed out by others, this approach to understanding the meaning of *asherah* is problematic on religio-historical grounds. In the ANE, the deity and cult icon were inextricably related: the icon was deity and treated as such.<sup>20</sup> Although divinity was not necessarily coterminous to its cultic manifestation, since if an icon was destroyed or stolen the deity generally continued to function as an agent outside of or in addition to its material embodiment, under normal conditions the icon was the “effective locus of cultic presence on earth.... as the only god within reach, people tended to identity the statue-deity symbiosis as their god and to treat it accordingly with care and petitions even if they theoretically envisioned the god as far more than the image” (Hundley 2013: 367). Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik have helpfully distinguished between “divinity as *primary agent*

<sup>20</sup> For discussion on the relationship between deities and their cult images, cf. Berlejung (1998); Hurowitz (2003); Collins (2005: 33-35); Dick (2005: 51-58); Porter (2009a); Hundley (2013: 277-281); Doak (2015: 22-27); Pongratz-Leisten and Sonik (2015: 3-69); Sonik (2015).

and all of the various media distributing its agency (its indexes or indices...) as *secondary agents*” and then noted the common human tendency to conflate “the referent and its (re)presentation, of the source of power or agency (the divine) on the one hand with the thing mediating its presence (the material index) on the other” (2015: 20-21). Thus, in the context of worship and lived religion, it would have been highly irregular and even nonsensical to speak about a cult image of a deity or “secondary agent” as something entirely distinct from the deity.

Proponents of the cult object theory have cited multiple parallels to the notion of blessing by a cultic object or sanctuary in order to validate their reading of the inscriptions. These include the Babylonian epistolary salutation, “may Uruk and Eanna bless my lord” (ABL 274; 268); a Phoenician inscription from Byblos recording a dedication to “our Lord and the Image [*sm*l] of Baal” (KAI 12); memorial inscriptions from Hatra directed to various deities as well as *sm*yt’ “standards” (KAI 251; 256); examples of individuals swearing by a temple or cult paraphernalia from Elephantine (AP 44/TAD B 7.3) and in biblical (Amos 8:14), early Christian (Matt 23:16-22), and rabbinic sources (Lemaire 1977: 608; Tigay 1986: 28-29; 1990: 218; Emerton 1999: 333; Smith 2002: 120; Cross 2009: 23; Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012: 132; Sass 2014: 58-60). However, closer inspection casts doubt on the interpretations attributed to this material. The first blessing by “Uruk and Eanna” has a peculiar history tied to southern Babylon, where temples and cities were sometimes treated as divine subjects or agents. Arnold has argued that the epistolary salutation was a “gubernatorial formula employed only by the governors of Uruk during the seventh century B. C.” (1992: 384).<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, blessings in greeting formulae from Mesopotamia and throughout the ANE were typically directed to anthropomorphic deities. For example, in

<sup>21</sup> Temples or parts thereof were also treated as divine throughout Mesopotamia for virtually all periods (Porter 2009b; Hundley 2013: 76; Sass 2014: 59-60; Hruša 2015: 63). However, they were not used in the blessings of greeting formulae. Porter has also suggested that non-anthropomorphic items such as these became divine through “a transfer of divinity to them from the inherently numinous god that owned them and with whom they were in frequent intimate contact” (2009b: 191).

Neo-Assyria, this included Nabu and Marduk (i.e. son and father), but also husband and wife pairs, such as Aššur and Mullissu or Sin and Nikkal (Parpola 1983: 439–442; Luukko 2012: 113–114).

With regard to the dedication to the “Image [*sml*] of Baal” (KAI 12) from Roman period Byblos, the immediate context reads *l’dnn wlsml b’l ybrk wyhww* “to our lord and to the Image of Baal, may they bless him and keep him alive,”<sup>22</sup> which coordinates “our lord” with the “Image of Baal” and suggests that the latter is an epithet of a female deity who was companion to the former. As many have noted, the epithet is similar to the epithets “Name of Baal” and “Face of Baal” borne by Astarte and Tinnit elsewhere in Phoenicia (Teixidor 1977: 48; Lipiński 1995: 82; Müller 2003: 127–129), all of which designate a goddess as the extension or representative of her male counterpart, i.e. intercessor (Seow 1999: 608–609). The noun *sml* is also occasionally associated with female divinity in late biblical literature (Dohmen 1984; Koch 1988: 111). The syntactical construction of the dedication therefore parallels other NWS inscriptions that express a relationship between a husband and wife pair by marking male authority over the female. The formula *l* + male deity *w* + *l* + female deity + genitive of possession followed by a statement of blessing *ybrk wyhww* is strikingly similar to *l* + male deity *w* + *l* + female deity + genitive suffix with statement of blessing *ybrk. wyšmrk* in inscription 3.6 from KA.

The *smyt*’ mentioned in memorial inscriptions from Hatra are now widely understood to refer to a variety of cultic standards that developed in Syria and Mesopotamia during the Roman period (Kaizer 2000: 245; Dirven 2005).<sup>23</sup> The standards consisted of poles with depictions of deities, astrological symbols, local emblems, and/or streamers that hung down from the side. Dirven explains that they were likely set up in sanctuaries along with cult statues, had a divine status as a portable symbol of locally recognized deities, enjoyed offerings, and were used in religious

<sup>22</sup> The verbs in the blessing could be analyzed as 3mp or 3ms. Donner and Röllig translate the blessing in the plural (KAI II:16) but Krahmalkov in the singular (2000: 179).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the alternative proposal by Kaizer that that the word *smyt*’ in some instances may mean “the Red One” as a reference to Nergal (2007: 42–43).

processions (2005: 128-131). Their appearance in memorial inscriptions along with other deities of the central Hatra cult in the stereotyped formula “remembered be PN for good before our Lord, and our Lady, and the Son of our Lord, Allat and all the standards” is therefore not surprising. The *smṯ*’ are linked to the preceding deities through the coordinating *w-* and stand on the same divine level. In her comparative study of the genre of memorial or dedicatory inscriptions from this period, Gudme has shown that the object of invocation in the remembrance formula was always deities to whom the dedicatee could look for bestowing blessings of prosperity and long life (2013: 91-134). Not only is the cultic phenomena of the *smṯ*’ far removed from KA and KQ in both space and time, but the Hatra inscriptions do not support the assumption that blessings were sometimes requested of non-divine cult objects.

The explanation of the oath text mentioning a temple at Elephantine (AP 44/TAD B 7.3) is similarly problematic. The full context of the oath reads *mw[m’h zy] mnhm... ym’ lmslm... by[hw ’lh]’ bmsgd’ wb’ntyhw* “Oath of Menahem... that he swore to Meshullam... by [YHW the god] in the place of worship and by Anat-YHW.”<sup>24</sup> Although the preposition *b-* attached to *msgd’* could be interpreted grammatically as “in” or “by,” several factors show that in this context its significance is locational, including 1) the absence of a coordinating *w-* before *bmsgd’*, which suggests that the *msgd’* performs a function in the oath different from *’ntyhw*; 2) extensive comparative evidence that oaths were often rendered in relation to cultic settings (van der Toorn 1995: 2051; Sommerstein and Torrance 2014: 132-138; Hurowitz 2015: 389-418); and 3) comparison with AP 6/TAD B 2.2 that speaks of an oath made *byhw ’lh’ byb*, “by YHW the god in Yeb” (line 4). The inclusion of this locational information thus served to specify that the oath was made to a particular manifestation of YHW, highlighting the local and communal character of oath taking.

Furthermore, the proposed emendation of *’ašmat* to *asherah* in the phrase “those who swear by the *’ašmat* of Samaria” (Amos

<sup>24</sup> I follow Porten’s reconstruction of the missing text, except that I restore YHW rather than Herem (cf. Porten 1968: 317).



8:14) is unnecessary. The Hebrew is comprehensible as it stands, referring to a local Israelite deity worshipped at Samaria by the disparaging epithet “Guilt of Samaria” (Porten 1968: 175-176; Hadley 2000: 77; Day 2002: 66). The use of Samaria as a geographical specification most closely parallels the well-known epithets “YHWH of Samaria” (KA) and “Calf of Samaria” (Hos 8:5-6), both of which refer to YHWH as the main city god. The name *ʾašmat* perhaps also plays on the masculine divine epithet Ashima/Ashim meaning “Name” well attested among neighboring Aramaean cultures, including the Jews of Elephantine, and alleged to have been a foreign deity imported into Israel in 2 Kgs 17:30 (Cogan 1999: 105-106; Merlo 2009b: 986-987; Radine 2010: 67-69; Rohrmoser 2014: 141-144; Niehr 2014: 169-170; cf. Barstad 1984: 157-181).<sup>25</sup> Although the divine name Ashima seems to have originated from Aramaean cultures to the north, there is little reason to suspect that the deity who bore the epithet in Israel was actually foreign per Deuteronomistic cult propaganda (McLaughlin 2001: 105-106). The divine epithet “Name” had a long history in Canaanite religion, being used to describe both male and female deities,<sup>26</sup> and the broader context of Amos 8:14 shows that “Guilt/Name of Samaria” likely refers to a local manifestation of YHWH, whether calf-icon or anthropomorphic statue (Olyan 1991: 121-149; Paul 1991: 270; Scharf 1998: 125; Cogan 1999: 105-106; Carroll R. 2000: 180), which means that it provides further witness to the convention of directing oaths to deities.

The remaining references to a practice of swearing by a temple and/or non-divine cult paraphernalia appear only in very late sources. This includes Matt 23:16-22 and miscellaneous rabbinic

<sup>25</sup> If the god Ashim at Elephantine is correctly linked to Ashima in the Levant, then it certainly designated a masculine deity. The predicative elements associated with Ashim in PNs are all masculine, e.g. *ʾšmzbd* “Ashim has given,” *ʾšmrm* “Ashim is exalted,” *ʾšmšzb* “Ashim has saved.”

<sup>26</sup> The masculine epithet “Name of El” is attested at Ugarit (KTU 1.22 I 6-7) as well as 8th century KA (4.2). “Name” is also possibly used as a theophoric in Canaanite PNs (Albertz 2012: 289, n. 105; Hess 2007b: 126). Astarte is called “Name of Baal” at Ugarit and later at Phoenician Sidon (Huffmon 1999: 610-612; Seow 1999: 322-325). Cf. the seal with the PN *btʾšm* “daughter of Ashim” (Avigad and Sass 1997: 486).

traditions about swearing by the temple and altar, which are so far removed from eighth century KA and reflect the peculiar interests and *Zeitgeist* of the theological discourses in which they appear that they can hardly be considered relevant (Zevit 2001: 404, n. 114). Because in these cases the temple or altar function as a stand-in for the holiness of the one God, it seems reasonable to suppose that the practices underlying the textual descriptions originated as a development or aniconic variation of earlier customs of swearing by a deity's cultic manifestation, as seen in the oath from Elephantine (cf. van der Toorn 1997: 229-248).

In sum, that inscriptional *ʾšrth* refers to a female partner of YHWH is the most plausible interpretation of its function in the context of the blessings. The fact that it is treated by the authors/speakers as though it were a deity must be given priority to other grammatical and semantic considerations, such as how *ʾšrth* should be analyzed or what specific nuance it may have.

### The meaning of *ʾšrth*

When it comes to the question of what *ʾšrth* exactly means and the identity of the deity referred to by it, the evidence is more ambiguous. The proposals that have been offered to date fall into three categories. First, *ʾšrth* is the name of the goddess Asherah with an attached pronominal suffix. Second, *ʾšrth* refers to the goddess Asherah but with a different linguistic form; the *he* is integral to the spelling of the name. Third, *ʾšrth* reflects *asherah* with an attached suffix and refers to a deity distinct from Asherah; the term has the semantic valence of a common noun, such as “goddess” or “consort.”

$$\text{ʾšrth} = \text{Asherah}$$

How to decide among these alternatives? The first has been the most popular among scholars who accept that *ʾšrth* refers to a

goddess.<sup>27</sup> The reasoning among many who hold to this interpretation is as straightforward as it is transparent: a) Asherah is attested as a divine name in biblical and extra-biblical sources; b) archaeological evidence for goddess worship in ancient Israel-Judah is sufficiently clear; therefore, c) inscriptional *ʾšrth* should be translated “his Asherah.” However, the major difficulty with this line of interpretation is that it fails to explain the presence of the suffix and its implication for understanding the meaning of *asherah*. What would it mean to say that the goddess Asherah is YHWH’s Asherah? As has been repeatedly observed, this approach would seem to make vacuous any notion of proper names.

One possible way of getting around this difficulty is to beg the question of whether divine names functioned as regular proper names in Israel-Judah and to argue that while the attachment of a suffix to a divine name is unprecedented in terms of known Hebrew usage, it may nevertheless have been possible in the cultural world of the inscriptions (e.g. Freedman 1987: 241-249; Müller 1992: 15-51; Uehlinger 1997: 140-142; van der Toorn 2002: 232). The rationale underlying the standard objection to interpreting inscriptional *asherah* as the name of a goddess is that divine names have the grammatical determinacy of proper nouns and, as such, entail the same functions and uses. For example, Emerton has argued that “the use of a suffix with a personal name is not in accordance with Hebrew idiom as far as we know it, and it is unwise to interpret the newly-found inscriptions in such a way unless there is no satisfactory alternative” (1982: 14-15), implying that the divine name Asherah is a personal name, just as David or Ruth. Yet, is this assumption correct? Do we know that divine names were proper names, in the sense that they were used to designate conceptually unique entities?

<sup>27</sup> Ackroyd (1983); Ahlström (1984); Dever (1984; 2005); Freedman (1987); Coogan (1987); Müller (1992); Merlo (1994); 1998; 2009a); Loretz (1992); Frevel (1995); Xella (1995; 2001); Renz (1995b; 2009); Uehlinger (1997); Weippert (1997); Brenner-Idan (1997); Rainey (1998); Köckert (1998; 2005); van der Toorn (2002); Schmidt (2002; 2016); Soggin (2002); Ackerman (2003; 2006); Rollston (2007; 2010); Leuenberger (2008); Jericke (2010); Berlejung (2011; 2012); Mandell (2012); Römer (2015); Kratz (2015).

Coming from our modern Western context, it is difficult to imagine a religious worldview in which deities were not conceptualized as unique supernatural characters whose identities could be called to mind through simple first names. We naturally expect deities to be comprehended as defined anthropomorphic personalities that transcend the mundane world, and so tend to be drawn to such representations when we encounter them in ANE literature. As a consequence, mythological, mytho-historical, and devotional texts have until recently played a disproportionate role in influencing how modern scholars understand the way these cultures conceptualized divinity (Porter 2009a). Because these texts portray deities as cosmic individuals who can be singularly located in space and time and whose names are used as though they refer to coherent unitary identities, we assume that they were always imagined as such, that their supernatural anthropomorphism was a defining aspect of their identity.

However, when the total range of literary evidence is taken into account, we see that the tendency to think of deities in abstract and supernatural terms only tells a part of how divinity was conceptualized. Over the last century archaeologists have unearthed texts dealing with cult and ritual from throughout the Near East and diverse eras and, as a result, it has become increasingly clear that, in regular practice, divine personhood was treated as materially-expressed, metaphysically complex, and multiform (Porter 2009: 153-194; Hundley 2013: 363-371). As Sommer has observed, ancient Near Eastern deities were fundamentally unlike human beings in that they were conceptualized as having multiple bodies that were simultaneously coexistent. Because deities could inhere in material icons of various sorts, their identity was fluid and fragmented (2009: 12-37). Their presence could be extended and spread over multiple instantiations through an icon-deity symbiosis, causing the divine person to be differentiated and pluriform rather than strictly unitary. Individual gods and goddesses could be replicated, theoretically endlessly if the necessary rituals were performed, and each physical manifestation could legitimately be understood as belonging to the category *elohim*. Paradoxical as it may seem, a simple first name was not always sufficient to identify a particular deity.

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of this manner of conceptualizing divinity in an Israelite-Judahite context is found in the inscriptions from KA where YHWH is named both “YHWH of Samaria” and “YHWH of Teman.” Although some have equivocated over what these designations mean (e.g. Emerton 1982; Allen 2015), I think there can be little doubt that they represent two distinct deities tied to two separate localities: a form of YHWH worshipped in the region of Samaria and another worshipped in the area of Teman-Edom (cf. Stolz 1996: 121; Schmid 2003: 25-28; Renz 2009: 309-311; Hutton 2010: 177-210; Jericke 2010: 170; Smith 2012: 205-250; 2016: 91-95).<sup>28</sup> Other inscriptional and biblical evidence similarly shows that YHWH had multiple local manifestations. An inscription from Khirbet Bet Lei links YHWH to Jerusalem (cf. Naveh 2001: 197-198; Aḥituv 2008: 233-236; Leuenberger 2014) and in the HB he is not only “the god of Jerusalem” (2 Chron 32:19; Ezra 7:19; cf. Amos 1:2; Joel 4:16 [Eng 3:16]), but we have mention of “YHWH in Hebron” (2 Sam 15:7) and “YHWH in Zion” (Ps 99:2), which reflect the localizing formula DN b-GN attested elsewhere in NWS.<sup>29</sup> Amos 8:14 speaks of people swearing by the Guilt/Ashima of Samaria, the god of Dan, and the Strength<sup>30</sup> of Beersheba, which are probably best understood as local iterations of the god YHWH (Olyan 1991: 121-149; Schart 1998: 125; Cogan 1999: 105-106). Furthermore, all the above local forms contrast with the cosmic form of the deity attested in biblical texts and inscriptions as YHWH *šēbā’ôt*, an epithet that links

<sup>28</sup> For the identification of Teman with the core territory of the Edomite state, see Edelman (1995: 10-11); Knauf (1992: 347-348); MacDonald (2000: 192-193).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. McCarter (1987: 140-141); Niehr (2003: 194); Sommer (2009: 38-39); Smith (2012: 214-215); Hutton (2012: 183-187); Hutzli (2013: 180-181). Allen has expressed skepticism that geographical names in the construction DN b-GN are integral to the identity of the deities so construed because they never appear in embedded god-lists or contrast two deities of the same first name (2015: 297-308). However, this etic criterion for detecting divine individuation is too narrow and simplistic to be useful, because not only are god-lists somewhat rare in extant WS inscriptions, but deities associated with contrasting GNs could easily be regarded as both separate/distinct *and* overlapping.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Barstad (1984: 195); Blenkinsopp (2003: 161); Levine (2014: 179).

YHWH to the sky as supreme commander of the astral armies (Choi 2004: 17-28; cf. Mettinger 1999: 920-924).

The implication of this data is that, like their ANE counterparts, Israelite-Judahite deities had objective realities distinct from and in addition to their more individualized personalities. Defying modern grammatical categories, deities could straddle the realms of proper and common nouns. For abstract mythological purposes, one could, and, indeed, had to speak of YHWH as a singular cosmic entity that transcended the mundane world and manifested his power over it: “who is like you among the gods, O YHWH” (Ex 15:11). For purposes of cult, however, where the material and tactile facilitated worship, it was necessary to distinguish which particular form of YHWH one was dealing with, resulting in the specifying epithets seen above.

Thus, from a strictly materialist perspective, we would have to conclude that the grammatical argument that *ʾšrth* cannot refer to the goddess *Asherah* because of the attached pronominal suffix lacks cogency and is based on questionable assumptions. When we set aside the specific issue of whether divine names could carry pronominal suffixes and limit ourselves to an analysis of how deities were conceptualized and their personal names functioned in religious worship, then it becomes clear that Israelite-Judahite deities were not exclusively understood in the category of proper nouns, but were sometimes treated as non-unique entities whose identification required further specification beyond their first names. To be sure, understanding divinity as pluriform and quasi-indeterminate does not then necessitate the assumption that inscriptional *asherah* is the name of a goddess. We have not demonstrated that pronominal suffixes were a viable means of determining divine names or that “his *Asherah*” is the most plausible reading of consonantal *ʾšrth* in the context of ancient Israel-Judah. But the evidence described above would at least allow one to make a theoretical argument in support of such an interpretation. Because YHWH at KA could be treated as quasi-indeterminate, something in need of further definition in the context of cult, then it would logically follow that the same would have applied to his consort. If this were the case, then it is possible that a possessive suffix attached to *asherah* is performing a specifying function

comparable to the geographical names attached to YHWH. Just as the latter are used to specify exactly which form of YHWH is the object of blessing, the possessive suffix may have been intended to specify a particular manifestation of the goddess via her association to a geographically specified YHWH. We will return to the question of whether this interpretation of *ʾšrth* is satisfactory shortly.

In addition to the textual witness that Israelite-Judahite deities were pluriform and quasi-indeterminate, the other major line of evidence that has been advanced in support of interpreting inscriptional *asherah* as the name of a goddess is the use of divine names elsewhere in the ANE in bound constructions syntactically parallel to YHWH and his *asherah*. Xella has collected and discussed examples from Ebla and Ugarit where female deities are linked to male deities through a pronominal suffix as background for interpreting the inscriptions from KA and KQ (1995: 599–610; 2001: 74–75). The examples from Ebla include “Kura and his Barama”; “Rashap of Adani and his Adamma”; and “Rashap of Duneb... and his Adamma,” the latter two featuring geographical specifications parallel to YHWH of Samaria/Teman. At Ugarit, Anat is linked to the deity Gatharu in the forms “Gatharu... and his Anat” (KTU 1.43.13) and possibly “Anat of Gatharu” (KTU 1.108.6).<sup>31</sup> Significantly, Xella notes that at both Ebla and Ugarit the invocations appear in ritual contexts and likely refer to the cult statues of these deities (Xella 1995: 610; 2001: 74–75; also Loretz 1992: 99–101).

Closer in time and space to ancient Israel-Judah are the bound forms Anat-Bethel in Neo-Assyrian texts listing oath deities (Parpola and Watanabe 1988: 24–27, 28–58), Ashtar-Kemosh in the Meshastela (KAI 181), and Anat-YHW, Anat-Bethel, Ashim-Bethel, and Herem-Bethel from the archives of Elephantine (AP 44/TAD B 7.3; AP 22/TAD C 3.15). Taken together with the evidence from KA,

<sup>31</sup> Pardee (1995: 301–303) has proposed reading the *-h* as an adverbial/locative morpheme, but he provides no clear parallel for this usage in a context similar to KTU 1.43.13. The fact that “his Anat” has an immediate antecedent in Gatharu, and elsewhere Anat is associated with the same deity, lends support to understanding the *-h* as a suffix. Cf. Smith (2001: 72–74); Xella (2001: 74–75); Schmidt (2002: 104–107); Heide (2002: 110–111 n. 2); Levine (2014: 180).

the above constructions are indicative of a broader West Semitic cultic convention of divine possession, where one deity, generally female or otherwise subordinate, was seen as belonging or inseparably linked to another deity (cf. Smith 2001: 72-74; Zevit 2001: 403; Schmidt 2002: 104-107; Renz 2009: 322; Levine 2014: 180-181; Römer 2016: 390-391).

So far, our investigation has focused on two lines of evidence that would possibly allow for interpreting YHWH's *asherah* in the inscriptions from KA and KQ as the personal name of the goddess. On the one hand, deities in the world of ancient Israel-Judah did not have the same determinate status as human persons, and, in certain settings, required extra specification to be identified. On this view, the suffix attached to *asherah* could be interpreted as a means of specifying the precise manifestation of the goddess. On the other hand, female deities were sometimes linked to male deities through bound constructions marking possession. These constructions include either a construct chain where the female is directly related to the male (female DN-of-male DN) or an extended conjunctive form that marks possession through an attached suffix (male DN + female DN + 3rd masc. sg. suffix).

We have already mentioned that a number of scholars have found one or both of these considerations sufficient grounds for concluding that YHWH's *asherah* is no less than the goddess Asherah. And indeed, if we assumed that Anat in the compound name Anat-YHW were the proper name of a goddess, then the derivation of the Judaeans at Elephantine from Israel-Judah would appear to make this conclusion even more attractive. From the perspective of linguistic function, the constructions "Anat of YHW" and "YHWH and his *asherah*" are syntactically analogous. They are simply different modes in the genitive for expressing the same possessive relationship: YHWH's *asherah* is the *asherah* of YHWH. Hence, Anat in Anat-YHW could be used to claim that YHWH's *asherah* refers to the goddess Asherah.

Nevertheless, in the final analysis, the theoretical argument that a proper name such as Asherah could carry a pronominal suffix is beset by a number of problems. First, although from a materialist perspective deities in the ANE typically had properties of both common and proper nouns, they were nevertheless treat-



ed in practice as quasi-distinct persons, i.e. unitary entities. For example, within the immediate context of worship at local cult centers such as Samaria, Teman, and Jerusalem YHWH was not regarded primarily as a member of a class of deities but as the YHWH relevant to the worshipping community. Consequently, we would not expect the discourse surrounding divine names to completely upend conventional norms of the spoken language for distinguishing common vs. proper nouns (cf. Wiggins 1993: 188; Tropper 2001: 100; Smith 2002: 119-120; Irsigler 2011: 142-143). As a matter of linguistic function, *asherah* cannot simultaneously inhabit both determined and indeterminate categories. If  $\text{ʾšrth}$  is correctly interpreted as the substantive *asherah* with an attached pronominal suffix, it cannot refer to the goddess Asherah. By definition, the suffix distinguishes this *asherah* from every other *asherah*: this *asherah* is YHWH's *asherah*.

Second, as Zevit has noted, to specify a deity by linking it to a geographical location is not the same thing as specifying a deity by linking it to another deity through an attached suffix (2001: 402-403). The first distinguishes a deity by extending its name, as it were, so YHWH of Samaria and YHWH of Teman become unique entities in their own right, whereas the second implies that the divine designation falls within an inherently indeterminate category. The *asherah* of YHWH in the inscriptions thus seems to be marked as indeterminate in a way that YHWH is not.

Third, the evidence of KQ militates against interpreting the suffix on *asherah* as a syntactical pointer whose purpose is limited to specifying the exact cultic manifestation of the goddess. In this version of the blessing formulae, YHWH appears without a geographical epithet attached to his name while the construction  $\text{ʾšrth}$  is unchanged. As YHWH is apparently being invoked here in his mythological, cosmic form, the retention of the suffix on *asherah* shows that it was not unessential to conveying its intended semantic nuance.

Fourth, it is not clear that the examples of bound constructions that have been cited to demonstrate the linguistic feasibility of linking personal names of deities should be interpreted as such. Anat, Athtar, and Ashim are indeed found in bound constructions with other known deities, making the existence of a

WS theology of divine possession difficult to deny. But are these proper names in the sense that they designate particular divine identities? A number of scholars have theorized that, because the name Anat is linked to several different deities and found in some contexts only in the bound form, the name has been generalized to a common noun and is not a reference to Anat *tout court* (cf. van der Toorn 1998: 88; Dijkstra 2001b: 122; Becking 2003: 224; P. L. Day 1999: 41; Granerød 2016: 256). B. Levine has proposed that the same may be the case with the bound forms from Ebla as well (2014: 181).

Finally, the theory that inscriptional *asherah* refers to the goddess Asherah relies on the assumption that there was no other Asherah in the pantheons of ancient Israel-Judah and that YHWH had taken the place of El in the cult. Yet, traces of YHWH's second tier status under El can still be found in biblical and non-biblical literary traditions (cf. Herrmann 1991; Barker 1992; Smith 2001: 142-148; Römer 2015: 78-82, 127-128; Ben-Dov 2016), and Thomas has argued that during the late Iron Age, when the inscriptions at KA were written, the representation of YHWH in cultic iconography as a calf and Bes-Horus figure suggests he was conceptualized as a young warrior deity and son of a primary goddess (2016: 145, 174-176). In the Bible, Asherah is consistently associated with Baal rather than YHWH (e.g. 1 Kgs 18:19; 2 Kgs 21: 3, 7; 23:4). If Baal in this case were understood to be an epithet of El, the linkage to Asherah and the astral divinities would cohere with the above picture. In effect, there would have been two *asherahs*, one associated with El and one connected to astral YHWH.

### **ʾšrth = *Asherata/Ashirta***

The second approach to interpreting ʾšrth has grown in popularity in recent years, in part because it avoids the problem of the suffix altogether.<sup>32</sup> By reading the *he* as an element of the name, wheth-

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Angerstorfer (1982); Zevit (1984; 2001); O'Connor (1987); Conrad (1988); Hess (1996; 2007a); Tropper (2001); Parker (2006); Na'aman and Lissovsky (2008); Na'aman (2012); Gilmour (2015).

er as a secondary feminization (Zevit 1984: 39-47; 2001: 363-366), a final frozen *-a* vowel (Hess 1996: 209-219; 2007: 289), or the secondary lengthening of a case vowel (Tropper 2001: 81-86; Na'aman and Lissovsky 2008: 186-208; Na'aman 2012: 305), these scholars obtain the divine name Asherata or Ashirta, which functions in the blessings as an independent deity parallel with YHWH. Yet, despite the simplicity of this solution and the detailed philological arguments that have been brought to bear in each case, understanding *ʾšrth* as an archaic spelling of Asherah seems the least satisfactory of the various approaches that have been offered to explicate its form and meaning.

Zevit has proposed the novel idea that *ʾšrth* is a dialectical variant of the name Asherah and that the *-h* on the name reflects a process of “secondary feminization” that occurred in Hebrew early in the first millennium (1984: 39-47; 2001: 363-366). According to Zevit, when the old feminine marker on nouns shifted from *-at* to *-ah*, on some nouns the new feminine marker was attached to the old. In support of this hypothesis, he argues that 1) the *-h* in *ʾšrth* in the inscription from KQ lacks a clear grammatical antecedent, which suggests that it does not function as the morpheme of a 3ms pronominal suffix; 2) in epigraphic Hebrew of the eighth century, *-h* was commonly used as a mater lectionis for a long *-ā* vowel; and 3) a number of Hebrew nouns, toponyms, and personal names apparently preserve evidence of this secondary feminization.

However, this analysis of *ʾšrth* is unconvincing for several reasons.<sup>33</sup> First, I already noted earlier that the KQ inscription presents no real challenge to reading YHWH as the intended antecedent of the suffix on *asherah*. The line reads well as a simple breakup of a stereotyped phrase, so that *mšryh* “from his enemies” is connected with the following imperative “save him” and the *w-* on *mšryh* proleptically coordinates YHWH with *ʾšrth*: “Blessed be Uriyahu to YHWH and to his *asherah*, save him from

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Koch (1988: 99); Müller (1992: 31-32); Wiggins (1993: 170-171); Merlo (1994: 32); Renz (1995b: 92); Gogel (1998: 60-61 n. 95); Emerton (1999: 316 n. 2); Hadley (2000: 98); Day (2002: 52); Tropper (2001: 101); Schmidt (2002: 104-105; 2010); Smith (2004: 188); Rollston (2007: 99).

his enemies...” The isolated reference to *ʾšrth* below and to the left of the hand symbol is also preposed with a coordinating *w-*, implying that it presumes an earlier invocation of YHWH. Second, that *he* could serve as a mater lectionis for a long *-ā* vowel is no argument in favor of interpreting it as the feminine ending *-ah*, since *he* clearly functioned as a mater lectionis for long *-ō* (or perhaps *-ahu*) during this period as well (Gogel 1998: 59-60). Third, the existence of secondary feminization as a linguistic phenomenon in Hebrew has not been demonstrated and the alleged examples cited by Zevit admit of more plausible explanations. For example, the *ִתָּה* nominal ending is peculiar to poetry and Joüon and Muraoka have remarked that it performs a rhythmic function and, in some cases, seems to have been chosen to “avoid the contact of two stressed syllables” (JM: 259). Earlier, Tsevat observed in his study of the Psalms that “whenever the word meaning ‘salvation’ is preceded by a ל + a substantive or a pronominal suffix, it appears in the simple form *יְשׁוּעָה*, whereas whenever it precedes them, it assumes the longer form *יְשׁוּעָתָה*; this latter form is reserved solely for these cases. The same situation prevails with regard to *עֲזָרָה* and *עֲזָרָתָה*, showing that this is not accidental” (1955: 21).

Fourth, the spontaneous addition of a feminine ending is implausible from a linguistic perspective. At this stage of Hebrew the tendency was to lose final vowels, not gain them (Garr 2004: 61-63; Hasselbach 2011; 2013: 33-34; Gzella 2011: 438; 2013: 856). A basic principle of historical philology is that exceptional morphological features tend to reflect inheritance rather than addition/expansion. Finally, Zevit provides no evidence for the existence of dialectical variation in the use of a final long *-ā* vowel in Hebrew, and we will see below that all known forms of Canaanite *asherah* can be explained on the assumption that they derive from a single basic form.

Hess has observed that, in LB Canaanite syllabic documents, the divine name Asherah is consistently spelled with a final short vowel after the feminine *-at* suffix, sometimes *u* or *i*, but most frequently *a*, e.g. *Abdi-a-ši-ir-ta* (1996: 209-219; 2007a: 289). Because the *-a* vowel does not appear to function as a regular case vowel, he posits that the name was actually vocalized Asherata and had

become something of a frozen form. The later occurrences of the divine name Asherah in Hebrew inscriptions are therefore analyzed as reflecting this older spelling with the *he* in *ʾšrth* representing an *-a* vowel. However, this hypothesis is problematic on several counts.<sup>34</sup> First, not only is the allegedly frozen form Asherata not otherwise attested in NWS, but even in the Amarna evidence cited by Hess the use of a final *-a* vowel is not consistent per his theory of regional spelling conventions. Variant spellings occur in letters from the same location (e.g. EA 60 and 61) and sometimes final *a*, *u*, or *i* vowels fluctuate in one and the same letter (e.g. EA 92; 137; 138).<sup>35</sup>

Second, the spelling of the name Asherah in the Late Bronze Age is not a reliable guide for determining how it was articulated much later in Hebrew. Although Hess notes that a final short *-a* vowel seems to be preserved on some feminine singular endings in Shishak's list of Canaanite toponyms from the tenth century (1996: 217), around this period Hebrew and other languages in NWS were in the process of losing short final unstressed vowels. The *-atu/a/i* ending became *-at* and eventually *-at* became *-ā* for Hebrew, Aramaic, and other NWS dialects (Garr 2004: 93-94; Gzella 2013: 857).<sup>36</sup> Since *asherah* is a nominal pattern with an easily identifiable feminine ending, we should assume that it experienced the same phonological development as other feminine nouns. Divine names were not a privileged category or somehow immune from general phonological change, as shown by the spelling of Asherah in the Bible.

Moreover, all known forms of *asherah* attested in NWS of the first millennium can be explained within this framework of final vowel loss. The term *asherah* at KA was probably vocalized with a final *-at* since the building complex seems to have been built and

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Wiggins (1993: 170-171); Binger (1997: 105); Merlo (1998: 28-30); Emerton (1999: 315-316, n. 1, 2); Zevit (2001: 404-405); Day (2002: 52).

<sup>35</sup> The significance of the final *a* vowel is unclear. Possible explanations include that it was scribal orthographic convention, an ending used for proper names regardless of case, reflex of the old accusative ending from Proto-Semitic, or the oblique case of a diptotic declension.

<sup>36</sup> On the loss of case vowels in Semitic languages, see Hasselbach (2011; 2013: 27-36).

used by Israelites and some evidence suggests that northern Hebrew retained final *-at* in the feminine singular (Garr 1985: 59-60, 93-94; Gogel 1998: 188 n. 232; Naʿaman and Lissovsky 2008: 199-200, n. 9; Gzella 2013: 857). Assuming that this is correct and that the *-h* represented a suffix morpheme, *ʾšrth* would have been pronounced *ʾašērātō* or even *ʾašērātahu* (Gogel 1998: 60-61 n. 95). The inscription *lʾšrt* from Ekron preserves a spelling of *ʾšrt* with a final *-at*, thus *ʾašerat* or *ʾašrat*. In a number of respects, the language used for inscriptions at Ekron is close to Phoenician and northern Hebrew, so the preservation of the feminine *-at* ending is explicable (cf. Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997: 8-15). At KQ, *ʾšrth* also likely stems from an underlying *ʾašērāt*. However, despite having the same orthography as KA, because the inscription was written in Judah it is conceivable that *asherah* was pronounced with a final *-ā* rather than *-at*. As Rollston notes, the conversion of final *-ā* to *-at* is the “standard development that occurs when a *tertia he* noun has a pronominal suffix” (2007: 99). When a pronominal suffix is added, *ʾašerah* > *ʾašerat* > *ʾašērātō*. Lastly, the *ʾašerah* of the Bible presents the *-ā* feminine ending of southern Hebrew, the end result of the loss of case vowels and final *-at* in the absolute.

Coming from a very different angle, Tropper has postulated that the final *he* in the divine name YHWH reflects a spelling of the old absolutive case *-a*, a case vowel he takes to have been common to early WS proper names and preserved sporadically in Hebrew/Canaanite of the first millennium. Because the name YHWH appears to preserve this case, he proposes that the *he* on *ʾšrth* at KA and KQ should be analyzed the same way, the *he* representing the case vowel *-a* which has been secondarily lengthened (2001: 100-102). However, this proposal for an archaic spelling of Asherah is no more compelling than the above. First, while Tropper has plausibly reconstructed a final *-a* vowel on the long form of the name YHWH, the origin and significance of this vowel remains uncertain. As the vowel stands, it is not a case marker but an integral part of the articulation of the name. In addition, the notion of an absolutive case has been challenged in recent years (Weninger 2011; Hasselbach 2013), and Waltisberg has questioned whether final *-a* vowels should always be considered on the same level syntactically or etymologically (2014: 769).

Second, we have no clear evidence for the retention and lengthening of an old *-a* case vowel on other divine names in first millennium Canaanite. Tropper's use of *dwdh* in the Mesha inscription as an example of this phenomenon is problematic, since scholars are generally skeptical that a cult of the god *Dwd* ever existed in the southern Levant (Olyan 1991; Barstad 1999). The phrase "*drk* of Beersheba" in Amos 8:14 requires no emendation. I mentioned earlier that the name in context is likely an epithet of a local form of YHWH. If *drk* is correctly connected to Ugaritic/Hebrew *drk* "to be strong, vigorous," the name would mean "the Strength of Beersheba" (cf. Barstad 1984: 195; Blenkinsopp 2003: 161; Levine 2014: 179). Further, the syntax of the phrase *ʾrʾl dwdh*, undoubtedly a construct relation, is more plausibly explained if we assume the first component (*ʾrʾl*) is a reference to a deity or cult statue, since it is brought before Kemosh in his temple, and the last component (*dwdh*) a noun serving to describe the first. In such a syntactic context, the use of a suffix on a genitive would be in keeping with normal Hebrew usage.

Third, even if we could be confident that the final *-a* vowel on the name YHWH is a reflex of an archaic case ending, e.g. the old accusative, we have little reason to suspect that this vowel would have been retained and subsequently lengthened on the divine name Asherah as well, the phonological situation of the fs. ending distinguishing it from YHWH. Because of the general loss of final short vowels that occurred in NWS discussed above, the final vowel on Asherata should have been reduced, leaving Asherat.

Beyond these linguistic considerations, the interpretation of the *he* on *ʾšrth* as a suffix morpheme is preferable on contextual grounds. Because *ʾšrth* is associated with both "YHWH of Samaria" and "YHWH of Teman" in the blessings from KA, the discourse context would seem to necessitate distinguishing one *asherah* from the other. It hardly makes sense to speak of two local forms of YHWH and of only one goddess Asherata shared between them! In addition, we have already noted the comparative data for the widespread cultic convention of divine possession in WS. Female deities were often marked as belonging to their male partners, so the formulation YHWH's *asherah* is intelligible within this religio-historical environment.

ʾšrth = *asherah*

The third proposal that *asherah* in the inscriptions has the semantic valence of a common noun has received less attention in the scholarly literature, since it is more hypothetical and lacks direct confirmation from other NWS inscriptions.<sup>37</sup> This approach to resolving the problem of YHWH's *asherah* recognizes that the term likely refers to a female deity, but goes further than the first alternative by positing a common noun meaning distinct from the proper name Asherah. On this view, *asherah* was originally a regular divine name of a particular goddess that has been generalized (Pardee 1995: 302; 2002: 122-123; 2005: 282-283; Levine 2014: 180-182) or was fundamentally a common noun that could be used as a proper name or a generic title depending on the context (Margalit 1990; Binger 1997: 145-148; Wyatt 1999: 103-104). In either case, inscriptional *asherah* is thought to mean something like "consort" or "*asherah* goddess."

Although the different variants of this approach are not equally persuasive or have relied on problematic evidence/argumentation, the general line of interpretation of postulating a common noun sense to *asherah* is appealing as a solution to the problem of ʾšrth. After all, this understanding of *asherah* fits the semantic-syntactic context, which methodologically speaking should be the primary criteria for determining the usage and implication of a word in an unfamiliar linguistic setting. We have already seen earlier that *asherah* cannot refer to the proper name Asherah because of the attached pronominal suffix, but must refer to a common noun of some kind, an *asherah* differentiated from all other *asherahs*. Not surprisingly, Hebrew epigraphists have often felt constrained to gloss inscriptional ʾšrth as "his consort" (Gogel 1998: 60; cf. DNWSI 1:129; McCarter 1987: 147; 2003a: 171, n. 3).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Meshel (1979); Engle (1979); Pope (1980); Margalit (1990); Halpern (2009); Pardee (1995; 2002; 2005); Stolz (1996); Binger (1997); Wyatt (1999); Rütterswörden (2009); Levine (2014). Others have proposed something similar, see Weinfeld (1984: 121-122); Miller (1986: 246; 2000: 35-37); McCarter (1987: 149); Lindenberger (2003: 133-134); Irsigler (2011: 143).



As mentioned above, there are two possible explanations for how *asherah* came to have a common noun meaning in the inscriptions at KA and KQ, the first that the divine name Asherah itself originated as a common noun and that this usage continued into the first millennium in Hebrew, and second that Asherah had semantically developed into a generic title in the context of Israel-Judah.

The first option is at least theoretically plausible. Many divine names in West Semitic appear to have originated as common nouns or had a common noun valence, so it would not be unreasonable to suppose that the same might be the case with Asherah. For example, El, Baal, Elat, Raḥmay are common nouns used as if they were proper names in Ugaritic: El= (the) God, Baal= (the) Lord, Elat= (the) Goddess, Raḥmay= (the) Womb. Asherah is also invoked parallel to common noun originating epithets, such as Elat and Raḥmay (KTU 1.14 IV 34-39; 1.3 V 36-37; 1.15 III 25-26; 1.23.13, 28). In addition, the plural *ʾašērōt* is used in the HB to designate a class of female divinities associated with various Baal deities (Jdgs 3:7), the same as *ʾaštārōt* (Jdgs 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sam 7:4; 12:10); *hāʾašērā* with the article functions as a companion term to *habaʿal* (1 Kgs 16:31-33; 18:19; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3, 7; 23:4-6), suggesting that a common noun implication was perceived for both. That the term *asherah* had a generic/titular function would also shed light on how it came to be applied to multiple goddesses geographically and chronologically separated one from another (Binger 1997: 146-147).

So what would *asherah* have meant if it were originally a common noun? Margalit (1990) has proposed that *asherah* is a long forgotten NWS noun derived from the root *ʾtr*, “to follow,” and denotes “wife, consort.” In support of this derivation, he notes that the noun *ʾtt* “wife” is invoked parallel to *ʾtrt* in *ks. qdš ltphnh . ʾtt . krpn ltʾn . ʾtrt* “a holy cup a wife may not see, a goblet even an *ʾtrt* may not see” (KTU 1.3 I 13-15), and once in a letter *ʾtrt* possibly bears an attached pronominal suffix, *laʾrti* “for my *asherah*” (KTU 2.31:42). Further, he correlates this proposed etymology with the drawing on pithos A from KA depicting YHWH and “his *asherah*” standing behind him and argues that understanding *asherah* as “one who follows,” i.e. wife, is illuminated by the bibli-

cal metaphor “to follow/go after” as an expression of marital fidelity.

However, as ingenious as this interpretation may be, it meets with a number of challenges. First, the meaning of *asherah* as “wife, consort” is not clearly attested anywhere in Semitic. From the earliest of times, *asherah* seems to have been consistently used as a proper name, including in Akkadian and Ugaritic, with anomalous usages showing up only later in Hebrew (Day 1986: 385-408; Wiggins 1993: 132-164, 175, 192; Hadley 2000: 38-83). It is difficult to imagine how this term could have originated as a common noun and yet leave no clear attestation of this usage preserved in Semitic more generally. Second, the analysis of *asherah* as a f. active participle from the root *ʾtr* is unlikely. The name Asherah is never found in a compound phrase as with other participial forms used as divine epithets (e.g. *bn̄y bnwt*, *qnyt ʾilm*), and it is doubtful that the verbal notion of “following” in itself would be sufficient to contain the concept of wifehood. Margalit neglects to notice that the verb *ʾtr* “to follow” is never associated with wives or consorts in Ugaritic (DUL3: 123-124). With regard to a participial explication of *ʾtrt*, Rahmouni has commented: “the process by which such a participle, originally allegedly used as a compound noun in a divine epithet, eventually became a divine name in its own right, still awaits clear precedent,” and further, if the name Asherah were formed from a participle we would expect it to be vocalized in Hebrew “in accordance with that of the active participle of action verbs, namely \**ʾōšeret* or possibly *ʾōšārā*, for neither of which is there any evidence” (2008: 283).

Third, the mention of *ʾtrt* parallel to *ʾtt* “woman, wife” in KTU 1.3 I 13-15 needs not be understood as synonymous parallelism. As argued by Park, “It would be better to understand the second clause in an emphatic sense, ‘a sacred cup woman may not see || a goblet even Athirat may not see’” (2010: 532). Fourth, the alleged use of *ʾtrt* with a pronominal suffix in KTU 2.31:42 appears in a broken context and it is unclear whether the *y* is actually a suffix or rather the beginning of another word. Several scholars have reconstructed an original *ʾtrtym* with no word divider (Heide 2002: 110-111 n. 2). The inscription is simply too fragmentary to use as a basis for positing a common noun meaning to *ʾtrt* in Uga-

ritic. Finally, while the syntagm *hālak ʾaḥarê* “to go after” in Hebrew is closely linked to the conceptual domain of marital fidelity/amorous relations, the expression has no discernible relation to the root ʾšr “to follow,” and it is methodologically dubious to try to explicate the imagery of pithos A on the basis of a presumed etymology. The concept of a wife “following after” her husband could have existed and even lay somewhere in the background of the portrayal of YHWH and his *asherah* on the KA pithos and yet have no relation to the etymology of *asherah*.

Binger (1997: 146-147) has similarly suggested that *asherah* was originally a secular name-title, whose common noun status would have allowed it to apply to many different goddesses. She speculates that the title was generally used to designate female counterparts of high gods such as El, Baal, and YHWH. But unfortunately Binger fails to provide any direct support for this original common noun meaning or to explain why *asherah* in the extant texts is used consistently as the proper name of a goddess.

In sum, we lack evidence to substantiate the notion that *asherah* originated as a common noun. All extant material suggests it was used as a divine name throughout the greater part of its millennia long history. Although *atrt* is sometimes used in parallel with other common noun originating epithets in Ugaritic, these epithets are nevertheless treated as proper name designations, so their relevance to understanding the meaning and origin of *asherah* is moot.

The only remaining alternative is to assume that the name Asherah had semantically developed into a common noun as an innovation peculiar to Israel-Judah or the central southern Levant. Levine (2014: 181) has proposed that *asherah* may have been generalized into a synonym for ʾilt “goddess,” comparable to the development of Ishtar in Akkadian into a general term for “goddess” (e.g. *ištaru*, *ištartu*, etc.), and Pardee has similarly assumed that the term *asherah* as found in the inscriptions from KA and KQ represents the end product of a long process of semantic evolution whereby the word came to have the common noun meaning “consort” (1995: 302; 2002: 122-123; 2005: 282-283).

As I mentioned above, the only place that we find anomalous usages of the term *asherah* in NWS is in the HB, which needs to be

taken into account when considering its possible meaning at KA and KQ. First, the plural *ʾašērōt* appears in Jdgs 3:7 as a designation for a class of female deities worshipped in association with various Baals (Cooper 1981: 347). The usage suggests that, for the biblical authors, the term had a generic valence of some kind. Although some have supposed *ʾašērōt* here to be a scribal mistake for *ʾaštārōt*, since the latter are associated with the Baals elsewhere (Jdgs 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sam 7:3, 4; 12:10) and the reading *ʾaštārōt* is reflected in the Syriac and Vulgate, the earliest versional evidence in the LXX supports the MT reading. Day has correctly noted that *ʾašērōt* is the *lectio difficilior* and it is much “easier to understand how ‘the Asheroth’ could have become corrupted here to ‘the Ashtaroth’ than the other way around” (Day 2002: 45; also Merlo 2009c: 1101). The Israelite Asherah is also closely linked to Baal later in the Dtr narrative (Jdgs 6:25-26; 1 Kgs 16:31-32; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3-7; 23:5-6), so the appearance of the divine pair at the beginning of the narrative is explicable at a thematic level. By referencing the Baals and Asherahs (native Israelite) instead of the Baals and Astartes (non-native or coastal Phoenician), the Dtr author is apparently endeavoring to link the former to the latter and stigmatize both of them as foreign and non-Israelite (cf. Olyan 1988: 10, n. 28; Anthonioz 2014).

Second, Larocca-Pitts has observed that the term *ʾašērîm* in the Bible appears to refer to female cult statuary and not to the statuary of Asherah in particular (2001: 191). The biblical authors enjoin or record the destruction of the *ʾašērîm* of multiple Canaanite deities (e.g. Deut 7:5; 12:3), including Phoenician Astarte in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23:14). If this understanding is correct, then it suggests that the term *ʾašerah* had developed a common noun valence that allowed it to be generalized to other female divinities. That is to say, the biblical condemnation of *ʾašērîm* presupposes a semantic evolution from Asherah as proper name to *asherah* as common noun for multiple goddesses, and then to *asherah* as term for female cult statuary.

Third, the generic quality of the term *asherah* is also suggested by the consistent attachment of the article to it when used by the biblical authors to designate the goddess Asherah (1 Kgs 15:13; 18:19; 2 Kgs 21:7; 23:4). Asherah is used as if it were a common

noun title comparable to Baal and in need of further specification: *hā'ašērâ* "the *asherah*" implies that she is a particular member of a larger class of *'ašērôt*.

In sum, a hitherto unattested common noun meaning peculiar to the region of Israel-Judah seems the most workable of the current alternatives for interpreting the phrase *'šrth*. We already mentioned above that semantic development of a divine name is plausible in a comparative context (e.g. Ishtar). From the little we know, divine names in the ANE seem to have had extraordinarily complicated histories. Not only do many divine names appear to have originated as common nouns, but their meaning could change and evolve over time, depending on the historical and cultural circumstances.

## Conclusion

Through examining the various proposals that have been made for elucidating *'šrth* from KA and KQ, we have been able to establish that it most likely has reference to a common noun denoting YHWH's female partner: "his *asherah*." This understanding of the phrase not only does no violence to the evidence that inscriptional *asherah* is a female deity paired with YHWH, but it also harmonizes best with the lexical-syntactic evidence that *asherah* is declined with a pronominal suffix with YHWH as the antecedent.

While we currently lack sufficient information to clarify the precise nuance of *asherah* in the inscriptions, the identification of the term as a common noun has important religio-historical implications and may point toward a possible answer. We have already seen above that because *asherah* in the inscriptions is declined with a suffix, it cannot refer to the goddess Asherah. This *asherah* is by definition distinguished from all other *asherahs*, including perhaps especially the goddess whose proper name was Asherah. The Bible suggests that Israelite Asherah was worshipped together with Baal (i.e. El) until the end of the monarchy (e.g. 2 Kgs 23:4). So, combining the inscriptional and biblical data, it seems reasonable to infer that, in ancient Israel-Judah, there

were two goddesses concurrently designated *asherah*, the goddess named Asherah in the sense of a proper name (*the* Asherah) and the goddess that appears in our inscriptions as YHWH's *asherah*. We mentioned earlier that some evidence indicates that, during the Late Iron Age, YHWH was still conceptualized as a second-tier deity under El and Asherah. If this was the case, then it is possible that the common noun meaning of *asherah* was developed to distinguish YHWH's female partner from the Asherah associated with El.

Whatever the relationship of YHWH's *asherah* to Asherah, what seems indisputable is that the worship of this goddess was a general feature of Israelite-Judahite religion, as it is attested not only for YHWH cult in the south at Teman-Edom, but also for Samaria and Judah. The distribution of the forms of YHWH invoked in the inscriptions suggest a broad cultural sphere where YHWH was believed to be wedded. Furthermore, YHWH's *asherah* appears to have been at home in public national cult as well as personal family religion. The Samaria and Teman mentioned in the blessings are likely regional cult centers associated with state polities, where particular manifestations of YHWH and his *asherah* were linked to established territorial boundaries, whereas the YHWH and *asherah* at KQ are expressed in the context of aspirations for the well being of an individual after death. The stereotyped nature of the blessings and KA's links with Israelite officialdom reflect the traditional, prevailing, and authorized character of this polytheistic faith. Finally, YHWH and his *asherah* were likely represented with icons or cult statues at the abovementioned sites. YHWH of Samaria and his *asherah* are treated in the blessings as conceptually distinct from YHWH of Teman and his *asherah*, and it is difficult to imagine how this distinction could have been maintained unless they were physically embodied in their respective sanctuaries.

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# A Phoenician-Inscribed Bronze Basin, Allegedly from Cumae

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**Résumé.** Le présent article est une courte édition textuelle d'une inscription phénicienne sur cuvette de bronze de la collection classique du Smart Museum of Art de l'université de Chicago (1967.115.17). L'origine de la cuvette est incertaine mais on rapporte qu'elle proviendrait de Cumae ; elle porte sur son bord une inscription de six graphèmes datée paléographiquement des environs du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle avant J.-C. La lecture, très probablement {npk ṭḥš} « turquoise vert(-bleu)e », renvoyait peut-être au contenu de la cuvette, auquel cas l'inscription a pu servir de publicité au marché or de désignation d'offrande votive.

## Introduction

Included in the Classical Collection of the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art is a bronze basin (acquisition number 1967.115.17) bearing on its rim what appears to be a brief Phoenician inscription. The basin was donated, along with eighty-nine other objects, by Edward Perry Warren from his private collection to the University of Chicago in 1902. These items were received by Classics professor Frank Bigelow Tarbell, who recorded each of the acquisitions in a handwritten ledger (Nielsen 1998: 3). Warren and Tarbell cooperated to provide not only brief descriptions and occasional sketches of the donated pieces, but also mostly laconic recollections of their provenience. In the case of the present bronze basin, the Tarbell Inventory gives only "said to come from Cumae" (Whiteley 1998: 157), the early Euboean colony (8th c. B.C.E. and later) on the Italian mainland opposite Pithekoussai on

Ischia. In a 1998 museum catalogue,<sup>1</sup> Brian Whiteley gave a full description of the basin's manufacture, morphology, and parallels. Since I consider myself primarily an epigrapher and not an historian of material culture, I will not burden the present short paper with inexpert attempts at expansion on Whiteley's fine study. I will instead confine my brief comments to the basin's inscription, for which no attempt at clarification has yet been made.

It is worth stressing that short inscriptions like this one often admit of no certain interpretation, especially if the inscription does not appear to fit a common type, e.g. an ownership designation. The predicament worsens when, as in the present case, some of the graphemes are difficult to identify. In the epigraphic comments below, I attempt to describe the most likely graphemic identifications and proceed to interpret the inscription from these. Alternatives that seem to me most worthy of mention are treated in footnotes (esp. nn. 5, 8).

<sup>1</sup> This catalogue of representative pieces from the Classics Collection was edited by Gloria Ferrari in the context of a student seminar, whose members wrote the majority of the catalogue's entries (Ferrari et al. 1998: vi). Whiteley's comments on the basin's inscription are made with reference only to Isserlin's (1982) survey sketch of Phoenician palaeography. Whiteley (1998) read {n g 'd/r X<sup>1</sup> h k} (cf. the reading offered below). To my knowledge, this catalogue entry is the basin's only prior appearance in print. Prior to Whiteley's study, the basin was cleaned to remove some corrosion. I compared pre-1997 and post-1997 photographs to confirm that no apparent incisions likely resulted from this cleaning and that no previously visible incisions were lost in the process. The only problematic case involves the scratches adjacent to the grapheme identified below as {k} (see also n. 6); these are covered by corrosion in the older photographs and therefore were not certainly present before cleaning.



*Phoenician inscription on rim: {npk thš}.*  
*Smart Museum of Art 1967.115.17. Photo courtesy of J. DeGrado.*



*Phoenician inscription on rim: {npk thš}.*  
*Smart Museum of Art 1967.115.17. Hand copy by the author.*

## Epigraphic Comments<sup>2</sup>

The inscription is composed of six graphemes, read from right to left {n p k t ḥ š} (see epigraphic and philological comments, below). These are incised on the rim (width: avg. ~1.9 cm) of the bronze basin (height: ~14.9 cm; max. diameter: ~36.3 cm). One notes immediately the seemingly excessive number of incisions employed to produce each individual grapheme. In some cases ({n}, {k}), the engraver has largely succeeded at approximating the expected letter form despite the surfeit of isolated marks. In other instances ({p}, {t}, {š}), the incisions do not contact one another where expected and/or produce by their disjunctions visual breaks in what would ordinarily be unitary “strokes.” Finally, the engraver has in a few cases (left of {t}, {ḥ}) added purely extraneous parallel incisions as if to solidify the form of these graphemes in the face of his somewhat careless technique. This has no analogues in the Phoenician epigraphic corpus, though a parallel for discontinuous incision of usually unitary lines can be found on the Greek inscription of a bronze helmet fragment dedicated at the Amyklaion, south of Sparta in Lakonia.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Amadasi Guzzo (2014) is a recent and excellent treatment of Phoenician and Punic palaeography (Peckham 1968 is still an essential point of reference). In the following comments, the cited comparanda are generally from Italian (including Sardinian and Sicilian) Phoenician sites, including Antas (Sardinia; Fantar 1969), Grotta Regina (Sicily; Amadasi Guzzo 1969; 1979), Mozia (= Motya, Sicily; Amadasi Guzzo 1986), and Sulcis (Sardinia; see references to previous publications in Amadasi Guzzo 1967). Also useful is the new summary of the Pyrgi tablets’ palaeography, Amadasi Guzzo (2015–2016: 10–11).

<sup>3</sup> See Jeffery (1990: 190, 199), pl. 35 = Lakonia 9; *e.p.* Buschor and Von Massow (1927: 37, 64); SEG XI.690. The {κ}, {λ}, and {α} of this item have the same stuttering form as do the graphemes of the present inscription. A similar phenomenon was noted by van der Kooij (1987: 115) with regard to the Amman Citadel inscription (limestone): “Quite often one stroke of a character has been scratched more than once.” For a thorough and up-to-date bibliography on this inscription, see Burlingame’s (2016) recent study of line 5.

**{n}** This first grapheme (height 1.09 cm; width 0.45 cm) is composed of three separate incisions.<sup>4</sup> This grapheme is not very useful for chronology or geographical affiliation, since the form of {n} is remarkably stable (Peckham 1968: 160–61). One can point to similar {n} graphemes from nearby sites—e.g. throughout the Mozia corpus, with particularly similar proportions in stratum IV (ca. 550–500 B.C.E.; cp. e.g. Mozia 22–24); see also Antas 4:3, 5; 8:3 etc. (4th–3rd CC. B.C.E.)—but these represent just a portion of the relevant data set and are not determinative for dating.

**{p}** This grapheme (height 1.01 cm; width 0.68 cm) is made up of four incisions. One might think to read this as {g}, except that this yields no sense with the reading of the following grapheme as {k} (on which see below).<sup>5</sup> The closest parallel is the {p} of Grotta Re-

<sup>4</sup> The rightmost and lower vertical (0.85 cm) is continuous despite a slight irregularity halfway down its height. The tick (or “shoulder”; see Peckham 1968: 160) that pokes up over the grapheme’s horizontal is certainly part of this rightmost vertical incision.

<sup>5</sup> An additional possibility is to read the second and third letters as {g} and {d/r}. This yields two possible readings: **{ngd}** “general” (KAI 46:7; compare BH גנר “leader”; this is the reading usually adopted for KAI 46 [= the Nora stele], e.g. in Zuckerman 1991: esp. 274 n. 12; and as a dictionary entry by DNWSI 713–714; Krahmalkov 2000: 325) and **{ngr}** “carpenter” (DNWSI 715; Krahmalkov 2000: 325; the preference for {r} over {d} is in all cases epigraphically justified). There are at least three reasons not to prefer this line of thought: (1) epigraphically, the third grapheme’s upper strokes are extraordinarily narrow and shallow; I suspect (but admittedly cannot prove; see further below) that they are incidental, since their dimensions are such that it is unlikely that they could have been incised by the same tool as effected the inscription’s certain constituents. (2/3) the reading {ngd/r thš} leaves the second set of three graphemes somewhat more difficult to explain, for two reasons: (2) one might suspect that {thš} is a personal name (PN), but comparanda are not actually attested in West Semitic; the occurrence of a cognate “name” (one of the sons of Nahor) at Gen 22.24 appears alongside other nouns that are clearly toponyms (TNs) “genealogized” as PNs. Interpretation of the PN itself is difficult; a basic orientation to the debate can be found at HALOT 1721b; (3) even if this were an “acceptable” PN, I have been able to find no other occurrences in Phoenician of an indefinite title or profession preceding a PN, as would have to be the case here. This syntactic difficulty is not insurmountable, but should be considered together with the epigraphic and onomastic difficulties already mentioned.



gina 34, which shows the same unusual stance (cf. Motya and Antas *passim*).

**{k}** Two light scratches at the space between the vertical and the horizontal are much thinner than any of the graphemic incisions throughout the present inscription and have a clear surface area between them. It is difficult to tell how these scratches might have come about, but I consider it unlikely that they were incised by the same tool as was used for the rest of the inscription (this has prevented interpretation of the grapheme as {d} or {r}; for some lexicographic alternatives that would result, see n. 5).<sup>6</sup> The letter itself (height 0.83 cm; width 0.35 cm) is composed of four incisions, three discontinuous verticals, increasing in length from top to bottom. {k}s of this nature are attested throughout the Italian Phoenician epigraphic corpus.<sup>7</sup> Such a form is, however, unusual elsewhere (Amadasi Guzzo 2014: 321–322), so that the present grapheme helps restrict this inscription's likely geographical origin to Italy; this is in line with the reports given by its purchaser (Whiteley 1998: 157).

**{t}** The upper incision (0.50 cm) of this grapheme (height 1.07 cm; width 0.57 cm) is thin but at least 1.5 times as wide as the incidental scratches adjacent to {k}. This stroke does not contact any of the complex of strokes that make up the letter's lower half. This conglomeration may include as many as six separate incisions. The employment of parallel incisions to clarify or emphasize the grapheme's shape despite discontinuous incisions is par-

<sup>6</sup> As noted below, the next-thinnest apparent incision—the upper vertical of {t}—is itself at least 1.5 times as wide as these scratches. In determining the source of these scratches, one could indict corrosion or the cleaning process to remove said corrosion (see the end of n. 1). Pre-1997 photos show some encrustations in this area, which had to be cleaned before the third and fourth letters were fully visible.

<sup>7</sup> For both wedge-headed and broad-stroke-headed models, see e.g. Antas 4; Motya 5, 7, 18, 20, 23, 24, 34, 40; less so Motya 8, 22, for which cf. the angle of the strokes; all of these are assigned to Strata IV–III; and the Sulcis Stele (ICO Sar.Ph.17, ca. 6th c. B.C.E.). They have notable non-exclusive analogues even in the Pyrgi inscription (KAI<sup>5</sup> 277:10<sup>28</sup>; Amadasi Guzzo 2015–2016: 10 summarizes the distribution of the variants and their parallels).

alleled in the {h}, immediately to the left. While this grapheme is indeed difficult, no alternative to identification as {t} seems preferable. For similar morphologies of {t}, notably without the horizontal breaking through the leftmost vertical, see among Italian inscriptions Motya *passim*, esp. 5, 11, 21–24, 31, 34–35 (cumulatively Strata IV–III) and Pyrgi *passim* (Amadasi Guzzo 2015–2016: 11). Since such forms do not appear to be attested before the 6th c., the present morphology could define the *terminus post quem* of the present inscription.

**{h}** The letter (height 0.88 cm; width 0.66 cm) has three horizontals (top 0.26 cm; middle 0.35 cm; bottom 0.29 cm), none of which intersect the leftmost vertical. The top two horizontals also do not intersect the rightmost vertical (0.78 cm). As with {t}, there is a seemingly extraneous stroke (0.56 cm) to the left of the true left vertical, which again may serve to clarify the intent of these discontinuous incisions by running parallel with both. Similar {h}s are attested throughout the 6th–5th c. B.C.E. and even earlier (Amadasi Guzzo 2014: 317 fig. 1).

**{s}** This final grapheme (height 0.72 cm; width 0.69 cm) is made up of four separate incisions, two discontinuous incisions making up the rightmost oblique, one thinner incision making up the central vertical, and a third, quite short, incision making up the leftmost oblique. None of these three incisions intersect one another; indeed, the center vertical appears to reach only approximately half-height with respect to the rightmost oblique.

As for probable {t}, this grapheme is difficult, but no alternative to identification as {s} suggests itself. The present item approximates the standard form of {s} through the 6th c.; by the 5th c., though, this grapheme develops a wholly different morphology—with an additional rightmost downstroke, i.e. like {m}, but with a shorter final downstroke—probably as the result of a different ductus (Amadasi Guzzo 2014: 322 n. 16 and figs. 1–3). For comparanda among Italian inscriptions, see Motya Strata V–III *passim* and Pyrgi (Amadasi Guzzo 2015–2016: 11). This relatively archaic form helps fix a ca. 6th c. *terminus ante quem* for the present inscription.

In sum, I consider the most plausible reading of these six graphemes to be {n p k t ḥ š}, with the appropriate caveats above regarding identification of {k} (see esp. n. 5), {t}, and {š}. The forms thus analyzed would date the inscription to approximately the 6th c. B.C.E. (*terminus post quem* by the morphology of {t}, *terminus ante quem* by the morphology of {š}). The morphologies of most of these graphemes are substantially similar to those throughout contemporary Phoenician, but the morphology of identified {k} and Warren's report (Whiteley 1998: 157) could support an origin in the area of Italy.

### Lexicographic and Other Comments

Following the above epigraphic analysis, I consider the most likely interpretation of this inscription to involve a division into two lexemes: {npk tḥš}.<sup>8</sup> Admittedly, neither of these lexemes is otherwise attested in Phoenician (including Punic),<sup>9</sup> but both have clear cognates elsewhere in Semitic, notably in biblical Hebrew. These allow restriction of the semantics of each lexeme to words for precious stones and/or their coloration(s).

The closest cognate of {npk} would be biblical Hebrew נֶפֶק (Exod 28.18; 39.11; Ezek 27.16; 28.13), each time naming a precious stone. Most notable for present purposes is the naming, in Ezekiel 27.16, of תִּפְנֵן among those items involved in a transaction of Tyre

<sup>8</sup> For the rationale against reading the second and third letters as {g} and {d/r}, respectively, see n. 5 to the Epigraphic Comments, above. The roots √nwp, √npy, √pwk, √pky, √pkk, √pkt, √ḥwš, √ḥšy, and √ḥšš are either nonexistent in West Semitic or have semantics that seem unlikely to occur in inscriptions like the present one, but an exhaustive discussion of lexicographic alternatives here would be out of proportion to the scope of the present article.

<sup>9</sup> That the present inscription should be understood as linguistically "Phoenician" is hypothesized from the reported findspot (Cumae)—at which the only expected Semitic language is Phoenician—and from the inscription's palaeographic character. Of course, linguistic and palaeographic designations do not always go hand-in-hand, but Western Mediterranean inscriptions in a delineable 6th c. B.C.E. Phoenician script show (or at least do not controvert) Phoenician linguistic isoglosses.

with Aram or Edom.<sup>10</sup> The identification of the particular precious stone(s) that is (or are) intended is a much thornier problem. For נִפְךָ, there exist two lines of interpretation. The earliest translations and other ancient sources generally identify נִפְךָ as a red stone.<sup>11</sup> This is the rationale behind the suggestions of the classical lexica, e.g. BDB's (656b) "Perh. = *ruby* or *carbuncle*." Another set of interpreters finds in נִפְךָ a green stone.<sup>12</sup> In modern scholarship, some scholars<sup>13</sup> have attempted to legitimate this understanding by comparison with a putative Egyptian loan-source *mfk3t*,<sup>14</sup> which has the well-established referent "turquoise."<sup>15</sup> The

<sup>10</sup> One can be no more precise than this. For discussion of the oft-adopted emendation of אֲרָם "Aram" to אֲדָם "Edom," see Cooke (1936: 302); Zimmerli (1983: 47); and Diakonoff (1992: 187).

<sup>11</sup> LXX and Josephus (*Ant.* 3.168) generally have ἄνθραξ "charcoal > a dark red stone"; the Vulgate's *carbunculus* represents a similar, perhaps derivative, understanding. Among the major lexica, the red-stone understanding is endorsed exclusively only by Zorell (1984: 524a), "prob. rubinus et granatus." Some have expressed other preferences for identification: "The *garnet*... probably of a red colour, but not the ruby or carbuncle... which were unknown in ancient times" (Cooke 1936: 302, 317; similarly Quiring 1954: 200; Zimmerli 1983: 48).

<sup>12</sup> Targums Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan have אֲדָמָה/אֲדָמָה "emerald" (< Gk σμάραγδος; see *DJPA* 179a) as the first stone in the second row at both Exod 28.18 and 39.11.

<sup>13</sup> Especially in English-language scholarship, the connection is often traced to Lambdin (1953: 152). Although he cites no predecessors (except "Dr. Albright has kindly made available to me his notes..."), Lambdin was far from the first to posit a link (cf. Muchiki 1999: 251). Already by 1899, Müller had authored a contribution connecting both BH נִפְךָ and Eg "mfk(t)" with a non-existent Akkadian *\*lupakku* (1899: 39). Müller already, moreover, identified both נִפְךָ and *mfk3t* as green stones (1899: 41), but he supposed that the Eg word was "eine uralte Entlehnung aus dem Semitischen." Given the antiquity of the Eg attestations and the observable phonological developments within that language, this directionality is certainly backwards (Lambdin 1953: 152; Muchiki 1999: 251; Takács 2008: 209).

<sup>14</sup> For the Eg lexeme as the loan-source rather than as an early loanword from Semitic, as some scholars formerly suggested, see the previous note. The loss of /-ʔ-/ in the Eg word is attested already in the Coffin Texts, and the shift /m/ > /n/ has been claimed for some other lexemes (Muchiki 1999: 251). In the present word, it could also be attributed to dissimilation in the labial+labial sequence /m(V)f/ (Takács 2008: 209; orthographic evidence for /n/ in the present item is meager; cf. Lambdin 1953: 152; Sauneron 1961: 241–242; Muchiki 1999: 251; Takács 2008: 209).

connection with Egyptian *mfk3t* is phonologically and circumstantially convincing, and the semantics of this lexeme in that language are solidly known. If one assumes that the Northwest Semitic languages employed the loanword with integrity and consistency, the most likely referent of Hebrew נִפְךָ and Phoenician {npk} is “turquoise.”

The word {tḥš} is somewhat more difficult to pin down, despite a greater number of cognates and better attestation of these. A number of recent studies have treated this lexeme’s cognates in detail (esp. Dalley 2000; Görg 2001; Noonan 2012; Mastnjak 2017), so I will only provide a brief review here. The one lexeme that is certainly related is Hebrew תַּחֲשׁ (Exod 25.5; 26.14; 35.7, 23; 36.19; 39.34; Num 4.6, 8, 10–12, 14, 25; Ezek 16.10).<sup>15</sup> But as a result of the noun’s rarity and generally under-determined nature (see n. 16), there has long been substantial debate as to its precise semantics.

Four major options are available. The first takes its cue from the often parallel phrase וְעֹרֹת אֵילִם מְאָדָּמִים and understands תַּחֲשׁ to designate, like אֵילִם, the animal source of the material from which the tabernacle covering is made. Both of the Talmudim preserve traditions by which this animal is identified with the “unicorn” (summary in Noonan 2012: 581–582). More recently, other animals have been preferred on more or less dubious etymological grounds. Already Reuchlin (1506: 538) defined תַּחֲשׁ as “Animalis nome quod taxus dicitur,” thus implying a cognate re-

<sup>15</sup> A review of Eg *mfk3t* was undertaken recently by Takács (2008: 209–212) in his etymological dictionary. Older opinions are collected readably in Loret (1928: 99–107) and Harris (1961: 106–109). Takács characterizes the Eg word as having “[n]o certain etymology.” As for the semantics of the Eg noun, Loret (1928: 108–114) gave a thorough and now broadly-accepted defense of the referent being blue or green “turquoise” primarily as opposed to banded green “malachite.” Lambdin (1953: 152) conflates the distinct referents (“turquoise, malachite”) despite citing Loret.

<sup>16</sup> תַּחֲשׁ is nearly always as the absolute noun with which עוֹר “skin” is in construct (cf. Num 4.25; Ezek 16.10). In all but one instance, the noun refers somehow to the outer cover of the tabernacle. This cover is to be placed on top of the אֵילִם מְאָדָּמִים עֹרֹת “reddened rams’ skins.” Only Ezek 16.10 uses the noun differently, viz. to describe an object with which or means by which the speaker will “shoe” (נָעַל Qal) the imagined Jerusalem.

lationship with such Indo-European nouns as Late Latin *taxus* and German *Dachs*, both “badger.”<sup>17</sup> This made its way into various Bible translations, including *KJV* and that of Luther. The late-19th and early-20th centuries saw preference for a new animal-related hypothesis,<sup>18</sup> that is, connection with the Modern Arabic word *دخس* *duḥas* “dolphin” (e.g. Wehr 1994: 315a) and translation therefrom as any one from among quite diverse marine animals, e.g. “dolphin,”<sup>19</sup> “seal,” “dugong,” “sea-cow,” and “porpoise.”<sup>20</sup> The hypothesis for the Arabic connection has major phonological

<sup>17</sup> The Late Latin (and continuing Romance, e.g. Italian *tasso*, French *tanière*, Spanish *tejón*) cognates are generally recognized to be loans (by the 5th c. C.E.) from Germanic (e.g. Gardani 2013: 185), within which other reflexes of Proto-Germanic *\*pahsuz* include Gothic *pahsus* and Dutch *das*. Although agreed-upon Indo-European and Semitic etymological connections are not unknown (e.g. BH שׁוֹר and Lat *taurus*; BH קֶרֶן and Lat *cornū*), the present item is a very dubious case.

<sup>18</sup> BDB (1st ed. 1907) did not found this hypothesis, as is occasionally implied (e.g. Noonan 2012: 582). Already Shipley and McLean (1899: 457) could cite a couple of scholars who had adopted this “more scientific etymology,” and the trail only widens as one proceeds back through the 19th century. Knobel (1857: 260) lists a number of authorities already adopting “Seehund” and “Delphin,” the latter specifically on the basis of the Arabic cognate. Citation of J. D. Michaelis (1717–1791) and Theodor Hase (1682–1731) extends the relevant line of thought to at least the early 18th century.

<sup>19</sup> “Dolphin” designates a paraphyletic grouping within the order *Cetacea*. Those adopting this understanding include Gray (1903: 34) and Cross (1984: 95–96; 1998: 88). Cross tried in a few instances (1984: 95–96; 1998: 88; cf. 1947: 62 n. 22) to suggest that the understanding “dolphin” was supported by the Ugaritic deity ʾilu’s living {mbk . nhrm / qrb . āpq . thmtm} *mabbaka naharêma / qirba ʾapīqi tahāmātêma* “At the two rivers’ source, / at the double deeps’ wellspring” (here as at *KTU* 1.4.IV:21–22, fully extant). The link between this locale and dolphins is, however, debatable (Pardee 2003: 137).

<sup>20</sup> For example, BDB 1065a has “dugong,” Houtman (2000: 337) has “manatee,” etc. It is not always clear whether scholars and others are aiming at taxonomic specificity, and many are perhaps simply assuming that the English terms are interchangeable, as they may be for less pedantic readers. More idiosyncratic hypotheses may also be found: Aharoni (1937: 327) opts for the “narwahl” (*Monodon monoceros*); Borowski (1998: 206) prefers to identify the תַּחַשׁ as a “crocodile”; Mandelkern (1925: 1242) cites an attempt to prove that the תַּחַשׁ was a גַּמֵּל הַנֶּמֶר, i.e. “giraffe,” in view of the colors with which its coat is described in the ancient translations. The connection is even etymologized with reference to חַיִּי—because the giraffe is fast—and חַיִּי—because the giraffe is silent even when one injures it!

points against it, especially *d* for BH *t*. Finally, connection with biblical Hebrew שִׁי "he-goat," is based on Böttcher's (1863–1865: 32–33) hypothesis that the semivowel *y* can reflect lenited (or fully syncopated?) \**h* (also Tur-Sinai 1956: 216). This would yield an apposite parallelism in the animals from which these skins are procured, but there are no secure cases of the alleged sound change in biblical Hebrew.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond the faunal realm, a second major etymological proposal involves connection with the Egyptian verb *ṭhs* "to stretch, often of leather." This is not a new suggestion—the comparandum has been noticed since at least the late 19th century<sup>22</sup>—but it has been taken up recently by a pair of proponents (Görg 2001; Noonan 2012), both of whom stress the verbal nature of the alleged Egyptian cognate. These two authors understand the precise development of the alleged Hebrew loanword somewhat differently. Görg (2001: 8–9) claims שִׁי to be in actuality a "Passivbildung," thus for the present collocation "gereckte Tierhaut." Noonan (2012: 588) settles on the assumption that "an unattested nominal form of Egyptian *ṭhs* referring to leather was adopted by Hebrew speakers... this word denotes a particular type of leather." The chief difficulty with both hypotheses is, as noted by Mastnjak (2017: 208) "the hypothetical nature of the proposed Egyptian word[s]," i.e. the first involves assuming that an Egyptian passive form could plausibly be loaned into Hebrew as a *qaṭl*- noun, and the latter involves assuming an otherwise unattested Egyptian noun.

A third line of reasoning involves taking שִׁי as a color term (already Bochart 1663: 985–992). The major ancient witnesses (LXX ἰανθίνος; Vulgate *ianthinus*; Targums ססגון) do translate

<sup>21</sup> Böttcher claims two examples of this phenomenon (1863–1865: 32): יָמִים, perhaps "hot springs" (Gen 36.24), which Böttcher thus connects with חָמֵם "to be warm," and פָּתַח "to be wide(?) > to be simple" (and derivatives) connected with פָּתַח "to be open." I find neither of these alleged examples convincing.

<sup>22</sup> Bondi (1897: 1–4), but there as a noun "Leder," then accepted as "[t]he latest and perhaps most probable view" by Shipley and McLean (1899: 457) (GB<sup>18</sup> 876a; BDB 1065a; Zorell 1984: 895b; HALOT 1720–1721 as possibility; similarly Cooke 1936: 164). Cross (1947: 62 n. 22) once preferred this to explain the tabernacle coverings as "an imported (?) specially finished leather."

the lexeme this way, but one cannot choose among these multiple possible colors without further argumentation. One finds a road towards such argumentation in recent discussion of the Akkadian lexeme *duḥṣu/duḥṣû*.<sup>23</sup> In a lengthy study of this word, Dalley (2000) argues that it designates inlaid beadwork, made either of ceramic or gemstone fragments; these would have served to ornament not only sandals and fabrics but also harnesses, bridles, chariot seats, boat-covers, and shields (2000: 10–17). It is worth stressing, however, that Dalley's understanding of this lexeme is idiosyncratic and has departed on dubious grounds<sup>24</sup> from the Assyriological consensus that *duḥṣu* is actually a color term.<sup>25</sup> In recent work reflecting this consensus, Steinkeller (2006) has cogent-

<sup>23</sup> For *duḥṣu/duḥṣû*, see CAD D 200b; AHw 179b: “*duṣû(m)*.” Dalley (2000: 5; see also Durand 2009: 153–54) notes that spellings with {ḥ} occur both at Mari and in later Assyrian. The etymology of the term is debated. To account for the variety of forms attested, Dalley (2000: 8–9) suggests that the noun was independently borrowed from Hurrian into Sumerian (allegedly with the Hurrian genitive morph), whence “a noun with a ‘weak’ ending, \**duḥṣium*” (Dalley 2000: 8) in later Akkadian dialects. On the other hand, Dalley continues, the Hurrian lexeme was also loaned directly into Boghazköy and Mari Akkadian as simple *duḥṣum*. The etymological chain proposed by Steinkeller (2006: 3 n. 13) is slightly different in that it does not propose a Hurrian origin for the term.

<sup>24</sup> Dalley (2000: 7) suggests that *duḥṣu* cannot represent a single color, since Oppenheim “was perplexed to find it in eight or more hues” (ibid.) as he worked on his edition of Mesopotamian glass-making recipes (Oppenheim 1970). This understanding of multi-hued *duḥṣu* seems, however, to be based only on VAT 16453 (Oppenheim 1970: 65–67), with eight fragmentary recipes. The item *duḥṣu* is either visible or plausibly restored at the end of each of one recipe's sections. Since it is not marked differently from the rest of the ingredients, it is possibly an additional input (cf. Dalley 2000: 7). The suggestion (first Oppenheim 1970: 67; Dalley 2000: 7) that each of these eight *duḥṣu* is a different color proceeds from Oppenheim's observation that additional signs—in one case clearly {ka-t[a]} (še)—are visible after {DUḥ.ŠI.A}. Oppenheim suggested that these were “adjectives that qualify the shade of the *duṣû*-color” (1970: 67). There is, however, no reason to prefer this hypothesis. The broken signs could be interpreted differently, perhaps preferably as survivals of additional ingredient designations, and thus not as support for multi-hued *duḥṣu*.

<sup>25</sup> Steinkeller (2006: 2–7, “green or bluish-green”), Durand (2009: 153–154, “la couleur du cuir de chèvre”), and Mastnjak (2017: 212, “greenish-blue”) agree that the primary semantics of the Akkadian term involve the color of the material involved rather than marking any beaded inlay.



ly argued that *duḥṣu* was itself a stone of “green or bluish-green” color, thus “‘chlorite’ (or ‘steatite’)” (2006: 2–7). Furthermore, when this term refers to leather, it describes its color, obtained through the employment of oxidized copper (*ibid.*).

Since biblical Hebrew שֶׁחָח cannot, given the contexts in which it appears, be referring to an analogue of the *duḥṣu* stone, it seems most likely that the Hebrew term so used applies to the color of the described objects, generally “skins” (עֹרֹת). This has important implications for the new Phoenician lexeme, namely that {tḥš}—best vocalized,<sup>26</sup> by comparison with the Hebrew cognate, as *tahš*—likely describes more precisely the color of that item to which it is an adjunct, in the present case, {npk} *nupk* “turquoise.” According to this interpretation, the inscription would read {npk tḥš} *nupk tahš* “green(ish-blue) turquoise.”

Unfortunately, there are few parallels for this sort of inscription, interpreted above as an apparent commodity notation on the rim of a vessel that was clearly not intended for storage. The fact that the inscription is clearly visible on the rim of the vessel might suggest that the legend was intended to be read by some observer. The restriction of imagined participants to human observers would virtually require that the “green(ish-blue) turquoise” was involved in an exchange or sale of sorts. One might envision a market at which this and other commodities were set out for inspection, but this might also involve assuming an unrealistically high level of literacy—in Phoenician no less—among 6th-c. B.C.E. Italian market-goers. I am unaware, furthermore, of parallels for epigraphs with such function and content in Northwest Semitic, even in the multilingual Mediterranean milieu.<sup>27</sup>

A possibly better alternative is to understand the basin and its contents as a combination offering to some deity. Here, the parallels are closer to hand, and the apparent difficulties are more

<sup>26</sup> Evidence for an anaptyctic vowel between R<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>3</sub> in Phoenician *qVt̤l*- nouns is not earlier than Late Punic (PPG §194; cf. Krahmalkov 2001: 31–32).

<sup>27</sup> A possible exception is the Old-Canaanite-inscribed bowl from Lachish (Diringer 1958: 129; Sass 1988: 63–64; ca. 13th c. B.C.E.), which seems to include in the inscription on its side a designation of measure or price: {bšlšt . yXXX}, but the difficulties of identifying the graphemes in the inscription’s latter half render any global interpretation hazardous.

easily surmountable. There exist a number of other Canaanite- and Phoenician-inscribed vessels clearly intended for dedication. One of these is the “marzeah” bowl published by Avigad and Greenfield (1982), which, despite some linguistic cruces, seems to refer to dedicatory activity. The present basin and inscription differs from the “marzeah” bowl in two important respects: (1) the absence of a theonym and (2) the hypothesized reference to items contained within the vessel rather than to the vessel itself. While I have been able to find no parallels for the latter situation, the former difference is not so troubling. Not all devoted items need have had explicit dedications. For example, after receiving short Aramaic inscriptions in the second half of the 9th c. B.C.E., a horse forehead ornament (Hera Temple; see Kyrieleis and Röllig 1988 = *KAI*<sup>5</sup> 311) and blinker (Charbonnet 1986) first plundered by Hazael, king of Damascus, made their way sans dedications to Greek temples in Samos and Eretria (Apollo Daphnephoros), respectively. The fact that these inscriptions included neither a theonym nor the name of the human devotee did not prevent the items’ dedications. In the case of the present basin, one need only postulate that some worshipper—or the craftsman responsible for his inscription—felt as though (1) the theonym was not strictly necessary and (2) notation of items contained was a suitable stand-in for notation of the containing vessel. After all, one might reason that the divine addressee could be deduced from the location of deposit, and the containing vessel was inseparable from the inscription itself. Only the basin’s contents were truly in danger of being misplaced.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> I owe thanks to Wolfgang Zwickel, who alerted me to the presence of the basin and its inscription in the Smart Museum’s collection. I also thank Jessie DeGrado for her photographs (included above, made concurrently with my study of the inscription at the Smart Museum on 15 December 2015) and suggestions, Nathan Mastnjak for sharing a pre-publication draft of his work, and Berit Ness for overseeing arrangements at the museum. Andrew Burlingame, Dennis Pardee, and Jeffrey Stackert were kind enough to read the paper and offer comments.

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# D'une formule d'incantation ougaritique à un mystérieux geste prophétique israélite

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FLTE / EPHE / UMR 7192

**Abstract.** The root גהר appears in two biblical passages only. In the first (1 Kgs 18:42), Elijah “bows down” upon the earth and seems to pray, or concentrate, waiting for the rain to come back. In the second passage (2 Kgs 4:34-35), Elisha “lays” upon a dead boy, the body of the latter becomes warm and he resuscitates. Or so says the traditional interpretation of these verses. In light of an incantation text found at Ugarit (KTU 1.178 = RS 92.2014), where the word GHRT seems to designate “evil words” pronounced by sorcerers, M. Smith and Y. Avishur have proposed a new interpretation: Elijah and Elisha’s gesture would not involve bowing the body, but making a rumbling sound. That said, the philological analysis of this Ugaritic text is still very much debated among scholars, and the new interpretation of the narratives in Kings seems entirely overlooked by biblical scholars. Against this background, this paper is devoted to a new examination of both the Ugaritic and the biblical texts. In particular, I point out data from the ancient versions (Septuagint, Old Latin, and Targum) that support this new understanding of גהר.

Le verbe גהר n’apparaît que dans deux passages de la Bible hébraïque. Dans le premier (1 R 18.42), Élie s’incline (וַיִּגְהַר) vers le sol et semble prier pour que la pluie revienne après une longue sécheresse. Dans le second (2 R 4.34-35), Élisée se penche (וַיִּגְהַר) sur le corps d’un enfant décédé pour lui redonner vie. C’est ainsi, du moins, que comprenaient de manière unanime la quasi-totalité des lexicographes<sup>1</sup>, traducteurs<sup>2</sup> et commentateurs<sup>3</sup> modernes

<sup>1</sup> Voir par exemple les dictionnaires BDB, HALOT et DCH.

<sup>2</sup> Pour ne prendre que quelques exemples, les versions françaises suivantes (dans leurs éditions successives, le cas échéant) utilisent, en 1 R 17.21 et 2 R 4.34-35, les verbes « se pencher », « rester pencher », « s’incliner », « s’étendre », « s’allonger », « rester étendu » ou « se replier » : la *Traduction œcuménique de la Bible*, la *Bible de Jérusalem*, la version *Segond*, la traduction publiée dans la collection de la Pléiade. De même, en anglais, on rencontre les verbes « to bend », « to

jusqu'à très récemment. Depuis la découverte à Ras Shamra d'un texte d'incantation où le verbe *ghr* paraît dénoter l'émission d'un son par des « sorciers » (tablette KTU 1.178 = RS 92.2014), plusieurs études ont avancé une nouvelle interprétation des passages bibliques. L'action effectuée par Élie et Élisée et exprimée par le verbe גהר ne consisterait pas à se pencher mais en un acte « magique » recouvrant l'émission d'un son particulier.

Cependant, les chercheurs divergent encore quant à l'analyse philologique du texte ougaritique. En outre, les rapprochements faits avec le verbe hébreu reposent uniquement sur le texte masorétique, en laissant de côté les versions anciennes. Dans cet article, nous voudrions revenir sur chacun des deux termes de la comparaison : tablette ougaritique et tradition biblique. Dans un premier temps, nous étudierons l'interprétation du texte KTU 1.178 pour ce qui est de la partie mettant en jeu la racine *ghr*. D'autre part, nous examinerons l'apport des témoins en grec (Septante, Aquila), en latin (Vieille latine) et en araméen (Targum de Jonathan) des livres des Rois. Un faisceau d'indices laisse en effet penser que plusieurs traducteurs antiques avaient connais-

stretch oneself (out) », « to bend over » : voir la *New Revised Standard Version*, la *New International Version* et la traduction *Tanakh* de la Jewish Publication Society. En allemand, la version *Einheitsübersetzung* utilise « strecken ».

<sup>3</sup> Voir notamment O. Thenius, *Die Bücher der Könige* (KHAT), Leipzig, 1873<sup>2</sup>, p. 228, 289 ; A. Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige* (KKHSAT 3), Nördlingen, 1887, p. 370, 403-404 ; I. Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige* (KHCAT 9), Fribourg, 1899, p. 111, 137 (qui renvoie à p. 108) ; R. Kittel, *Die Bücher der Könige* (HKAT), Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900, p. 149, 201 ; J. A. Montgomery et H. S. Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings* (ICC), Edinburgh, 1951, p. 306, 369 ; J. Gray, *I and II Kings* (OTL), Philadelphia, 1970<sup>3</sup>, p. 403-404, 494 ; G. H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 2 vol. (NCBC), Basingstoke/Grand Rapids, 1984, p. 325-326, 409 ; E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige. 1. Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25* (ATD 11.2), Göttingen, 1984, p. 210, 214, 290 ; S. J. DeVries, *1 Kings* (WBC 12), Waco, Word, 1985 ; T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* (WBC 13), Waco, 1985, p. 43 ; M. Cogan et H. Tadmor, *II Kings. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 11), New York, 1988, p. 55, 58 ; I. W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (NIBC), Peabody, 1995, p. 142 ; R. L. Cohn, *2 Kings* (Berit Olam), Collegeville, 2000, p. 257 ; M. Cogan, *I Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 10), New York, 2001 ; L. M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (AOTC 9), Nottingham/Downers Grove, 2014, p. 239, 320, 325.

sance d'un sens du verbe גהר proche de celui qui a été récemment mis au jour sur le texte ougaritique.

## 1. Le texte d'incantation ougaritique KTU 1.178 (= RS 92.2014.11)

### 1.1. Le texte dans son ensemble

C'est au regretté P. Bordreuil et à D. Pardee que l'on doit l'*editio princeps* de cette tablette<sup>4</sup>. Pour la commodité du lecteur, il vaut la peine de reproduire ici leur traduction, qui peut servir de point de départ aux discussions :

- (1) (Lorsque) l'inconnu t'appelle et se met à écumer,
- (2) Moi, pour ma part, je t'appellerai,  
J'agiterai (3) du bois sacré,  
De sorte que sur toi (4) le serpent ne monte pas,  
Qu'en dessous de toi (5) le scorpion ne se dresse pas.
- (6) Oui ! Que le serpent ne monte pas sur toi !
- (7) Oui ! Que le scorpion ne se dresse pas (8) en dessous de toi !  
De même, que les (9) tourmenteurs, les sorciers ne prêtent  
pas l'oreille,  
A la parole (10) d'un méchant,  
A une parole d'être humain.
- (11) (Dès) qu'elle résonne dans leur bouche, sur leurs lèvres,
- (12) Que les sorciers, les tourmenteurs (la) versent, (13) pour  
leur part, par terre,
- (14) Au bénéfice de 'Urtēnu, de son corps, (15) de ses membres.

<sup>4</sup> P. Bordreuil et D. Pardee, « Une incantation », in M. Yon et D. Arnaud (éd.), *Études ougaritiques I. Travaux 1985-1995* (RSO 14), Paris, 2001, p. 387-392. Voir aussi D. Pardee, « A Ugaritic Incantation against Serpents and Sorcerers », in W. W. Hallo (éd.), *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1. *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, Leiden/New York/Boston, 1997, p. 327-328 ; id., *Les textes rituels*, fasc. 2 : *Chapitres 54-83, Appendices et figures*, Paris, Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 2000, p. 829-833 ; id., *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (Writing from the Ancient World 10), Atlanta, SBL, 2002, p. 158-159.

Dans des publications ultérieures, Bordreuil et Pardee ont apporté de très légères modifications à leur traduction. À la ligne 12, il faudrait plutôt comprendre : « Que, de même, on (les) verse par terre, les sorciers, les tourmenteurs ! »<sup>5</sup>. De plus, aux lignes 9 et 12, les « tourmenteurs » pourraient être compris plus précisément comme « ceux qui attaquent par la parole »<sup>6</sup>.

De cette édition ressortent les aspects principaux du document : il s'agit d'une incantation au profit de ʾUrtēnu, dans la maison duquel la tablette a été retrouvée ; l'objectif est de le protéger des morsures de serpent et de scorpion, mais aussi de paroles « maléfiques » qui pourraient lui être lancées. Toutefois, des obscurités demeurent. Ainsi, comment comprendre l'évocation d'un « inconnu » en début de texte et pourquoi écume-t-il ? Faut-il considérer que les « sorciers » des lignes 9 et 12 sont distincts du « méchant » de la ligne 10 ? Selon Pardee, l'attaque « semble venir de la part d'un ennemi qui aurait engagé des spécialistes de paroles maléfiques et des sorciers pour qu'ils envoient à leur tour des serpents et des scorpions contre Ourtenou. L'inconnu qui sollicite l'intéressé au début du texte sera cet ennemi, peut-être présenté déjà sous la guise d'un reptile puisqu'il se met à écumer, car en accadien une image du venin des serpents est l'écume. »<sup>7</sup> Néanmoins, on s'étonne du rôle potentiel prêté aux sorciers : ils risqueraient de « prêter l'oreille à la parole d'un méchant ». On s'attendrait plutôt à ce qu'ils soient eux-même à l'origine de la formule-sortilège.

Dans les années qui suivirent la publication initiale, plusieurs études<sup>8</sup> ont corrigé ici et là la traduction et permis d'éclaircir di-

<sup>5</sup> P. Bordreuil et D. Pardee, *Manuel d'ougaritique*, vol. 2 : *Choix de textes. Glossaire*, Paris, Geuthner, 2004, p. 69-70 (texte 18).

<sup>6</sup> D. Pardee, « La pratique de la religion à Ugarit d'après les textes », in J.-M. Michaud (éd.), *La Bible et l'héritage d'Ougarit*, Sherbrooke, G. G. C., 2005, p. 137.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>8</sup> J. N. Ford, « The New Ugaritic Incantation against Sorcery RS 1992.2014 », *UF* 34 (2002), p. 119-152 ; R. Hawley, « Hyssop in the Ugaritic Incantation RS 92.2014 », *JANER* 4 (2004), p. 29-70 ; H. Niehr, « Texte aus Ugarit », in B. Janowski et G. Wilhelm (éd.), *Omina, Orakel, Rituale und Beschwörungen* (TUAT NF 4), Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008, p. 243-257, spéc. 256-257 ; M. Dietrich et O. Loretz, « Präventiv-Beschwörung gegen Schlangen, Skorpionen und Hexerei zum Schutz des Präfekten Urtenu (KTU 1.178 = RS 92.2014) », *UF* 41 (2009), 65-73 ;

vers aspects du texte, en dépit de désaccords persistants. Citons à titre d'illustration la dernière traduction en date, due à G. del Olmo Lete, qui tire profit des apports de ses prédécesseurs tout en avançant une nouvelle interprétation<sup>9</sup> :

- (1) He who does not know will say to you: hyssop (is the suitable instrument).
- (2) But I will say to you (and) corroborate it: holy tree.  
And (so) upon you will you not allow the snake to jump,  
(and [so] upon you the snake will not jump)  
Nor beneath you will you allow the scorpion to coil!  
Indeed you will not allow the snake to jump upon you,
- (6) (Indeed the snake will not jump upon you)  
In no way will you allow the scorpion beneath you to coil!
- (7) (in no way will the scorpion beneath you coil !)  
In the same way, do not let the foul-mouthed sorcerers  
proclaim  
the words of the wicked, the word(s) of people,  
the hullabaloo of their mouths and their lips.  
May (they) be poured out like water on the earth  
the foul-mouthed/insidious sorcerers!  
(Incantation) for ʾUrtēnu, for his body (and) for his  
complexion/members.

Dietrich et Loretz ont proposé quelques corrections épigraphiques, dont une seule concerne notre propos et sur laquelle nous reviendrons<sup>10</sup>. Mais, dans l'ensemble, en dépit de divergences quant à certains détails, tous les chercheurs s'accordent

G. del Olmo Lete, « RS 92.2014 : A New Interpretation », in G. del Olmo Lete, J. Vidal et W. G. E. Watson (éd.), *The Perfumes of Seven Tamarisks. Studies in Honour of Wilfred G. E. Watson* (AOAT 394), Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 2012, p. 143-157 ; id., *Incantations and Anti-Witchcraft Texts from Ugarit* (Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 4), Boston/Berlin, de Gruyter, 2014, p. 173-187.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, spéc. 173-174. Nous reprenons sa proposition telle quelle, y compris les traductions alternatives signalées entre parenthèses.

<sup>10</sup> M. Dietrich et O. Loretz, « Präventiv-Beschwörung », p. 71 ; voir aussi M. Dietrich, O. Loretz et J. Sanmartín, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (AOAT 360/1), Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 2013<sup>3</sup>, p. 167.

sur le sens principal du texte : il s'agit de protéger ʾUrtēnu de morsures de serpents et de scorpions, ainsi que de paroles maléfiques. Dans la suite de cet article, nous nous concentrerons sur la partie du texte qui concerne notre propos, à savoir celle où apparaît la racine *ghr*.

## 1.2. Les lignes 8 à 11

La phrase qui nous intéresse s'étend sur les lignes 8 (derniers mots) à 11 :

*km.l.tudn* (9) *dbbm.kšpm*.  
*hwt* (10) *rš.hwt.bn nšm*  
 (11) *ghrt.phm.w.špthm*

Le tableau qui suit rassemble les principales traductions proposées. Il importe de noter que Dietrich et Loretz ont une lecture différente du premier mot de la ligne 11 : *gḡrt*<sup>11</sup> et non *ghrt*. Cependant, l'examen d'une photographie de bonne qualité nous semble confirmer qu'il faut lire la lettre *g*, comme tous les autres chercheurs<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Voir les références de la note précédente.

<sup>12</sup> Voir la photographie disponible (texte 18) sur le CD-ROM fourni avec le *Manuel d'ougaritique* de Bordreuil et Pardee (voir la note 5). L'image de la tranche peut éventuellement donner l'impression superficielle de quatre « stries » qui proviendraient du tracé de quatre clous, mais une comparaison serrée avec la photo du recto de la tablette montre qu'il n'y en a que trois. En effet, une tache à gauche de la lettre (due à une incrustation) peut servir de repère pour une comparaison des distances, et il en ressort que la partie la plus inférieure de la lettre sur l'image de la tranche correspond au troisième clou inférieur d'un *g*. Il n'y a pas de clou supplémentaire en dessous, comme il le faudrait pour lire un *ḡ*.

Bordreuil et Pardee (2001) <sup>13</sup>	<i>De même, que les tourmenteurs, les sorciers ne prêtent pas l'oreille, A la parole d'un méchant, A une parole d'être humain. (Dès) qu'elle résonne dans leur bouche, sur leurs lèvres...</i>
Ford (2002) <sup>14</sup>	<i>Likewise, you shall not heed (any other) sorcerous accusations, the magic words of the wicked, the magic words of (any) men, the (destructive) rumble of their mouths and their lips !</i>
Niehr (2008) <sup>15</sup>	<i>Ebenso mögen nicht hören die Beschwörer (und) die Hexer die Worte des Bösen, die Worte eines Menschen. Den Lärm ihres Mundes und ihrer Lippen (mögen die Hexer und die Beschwörer wie Wasser zur Erde ausgiessen.)</i>
Dietrich et Loretz (2009) <sup>16</sup>	<i>So können (dir) nicht mehr zur Last werden die Zauberreden, die Worte eines Bösen, die Worte irgendjemandes, die Drohungen aus ih- rem Mund und ihren Lippen !</i>
Del Olmo Lete (2014) <sup>17</sup>	<i>In the same way, do not let the foul-mouthed sorcerers proclaim the words of the wicked, the word(s) of people, the hullabaloo of their mouths and their lips.</i>

Les divergences entre ces traductions s'expliquent par plusieurs difficultés. Tout d'abord, comment analyser la forme verbale *tudn* ? Tropper, suivi en cela par Dietrich et Loretz, discerne ici la racine *ʾwd*, signifiant *Last aufbürden, besteuern, Geld einfordern*. Cependant, le sens de cette racine est incertain, comme Tropper le relève lui-même<sup>18</sup>. De fait, l'acception retenue par Dietrich et Loretz ne semble guère trouver d'appui dans les attestations de la

<sup>13</sup> Bordreuil et Pardee, « Une incantation », p. 387.

<sup>14</sup> Ford, p. 120.

<sup>15</sup> Niehr, p. 257.

<sup>16</sup> Dietrich et Loretz, p. 68.

<sup>17</sup> Del Olmo Lete, p. 174.

<sup>18</sup> J. Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, Münster, Ugarit-Ferlag, 2000, p. 612, 643.

racine<sup>19</sup> et cette proposition paraît très fragile. Il est préférable, avec la plupart des chercheurs, de comprendre *udn* comme un verbe dénominatif formé à partir du substantif *udn* (« oreille »). Reste à savoir à quel schème et à quelle personne il est conjugué ici, et cela dépend étroitement de la manière dont on estime qu'il s'insère dans son contexte, autrement dit de la façon dont on identifie le sujet et le complément d'objet direct de ce verbe.

Selon certains, *tudn* se trouve ici au schème G, d'où le sens « écouter, prêter l'oreille ». Pour Bordreuil et Pardee, le sujet n'est autre que les *dbbm.kšpm*, dont il faut éviter qu'ils écoutent, et le complément d'objet direct les paroles (*hwt*) mentionnées aux lignes 9-10. Cette interprétation nous semble peu vraisemblable, dans la mesure où elle suppose que les « sorciers » soient cantonnés dans un rôle passif à l'égard des paroles maléfiques en question. Il est nettement plus probable qu'ils soient eux-mêmes à l'origine de ces sortilèges. Ford et Niehr pensent plutôt que le sujet n'est autre que le destinataire du texte, le verbe étant à conjugué à la 2<sup>e</sup> pers. sg. : « tu ne dois pas écouter ». Cela suppose que le complément d'objet direct est constitué non seulement de l'expression double *hwt rš<sup>c</sup>.hwt.bn nšm*, mais aussi de *dbbm.kšpm*, puisque cette dernière formule ne désigne plus le sujet. Ford traduit ainsi *dbbm.kšpm* par *sorcerous accusations* et Niehr par *die Zaubereden*. Del Olmo Lete objecte à juste titre : « It makes little sense to advise the victim of sorcery to disregard any sorcerous statements that are pernicious in themselves. On the contrary, he has to take them into account in order to neutralise them by the appropriate incantation formula<sup>20</sup> ». En réalité, Bordreuil et Pardee ont sans doute raison de comprendre *dbbm.kšpm* comme l'apposition de deux termes désignant les mêmes personnes, les *dbbm* et les *kšpm* étant assimilés dans un autre texte d'incantation<sup>21</sup>.

Une autre approche a été avancée par del Olmo Lete : *tudn* serait ici au schème D, avec une valeur factitive, d'où le sens « faire

<sup>19</sup> D. Cohen, F. Bron et A. Lonnet, *Dictionnaire des racines sémitiques ou attestées dans les langues sémitiques*, fasc. 2, Paris/Mouton/La Haye, 1994, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Del Olmo Lete, p. 181.

<sup>21</sup> Bordreuil et Pardee, « Une incantation », p. 390, renvoyant à RIH 78/20, ligne 1.



entendre », « proclamer », sur la base d'une comparaison avec l'arabe<sup>22</sup>. Cela permet de comprendre, de manière naturelle, que ce sont les *dbbm.kšpm* qui sont susceptibles d'énoncer des paroles maléfiques. Celles-ci sont évoquées à l'aide de deux expressions apposées : *hwt ršc*, soit « la parole d'un méchant », et *hwt.bn nšm*, autrement dit « la parole d'un être humain ». Si ce dernier syntagme surprend dans la mesure où il évoque une personne quelconque, l'apposition avec la formule *hwt ršc* ne laisse pas de doute sur le fait qu'il est question d'une parole maléfique.

Suit l'expression qui nous intéresse : *ghrt.phm.w.špthm* selon la plupart des ougaritologues. Dietrich et Loretz lisent plutôt *gğrt* et rendent ce terme par *Drohungen* (« menaces »), mais nous avons vu que la lecture *ghrt* est préférable au plan épigraphique. Bordreuil et Pardee voient ici le début d'une nouvelle phrase : « (Dès) qu'elle résonne dans leur bouche, sur leurs lèvres... ». Ils analysent *ghrt* comme un verbe conjugué à la 3<sup>e</sup> pers. fém. dont le sujet ne serait autre que la « parole » (*hwt*) mentionnée auparavant (aux lignes 9-10). En se fondant sur le sens que revêt cette racine en arabe, ils proposent de donner le sens de « résonner » au verbe *ghr*. Ils notent cependant une difficulté : en l'absence de préposition devant les termes *phm* et *špthm*, ceux-ci doivent être compris comme des « compléments adverbiaux ». Ford et del Olmo Lete préfèrent analyser *ghrt* comme un substantif en apposition à *hwt*, ce qui permet, nous semble-t-il, une lecture plus naturelle de la séquence des lignes 9-11. On y trouve trois expressions parallèles désignant les paroles maléfiques :

*hwt ršc*

*hwt.bn nšm*

*ghrt.phm.w.špthm*

Dans cette ligne d'interprétation, le sens de *ghrt* est déterminé par trois facteurs. Premièrement, le fait que *ghrt* soit construit sur le mot *phm* (« leur bouche ») indique que l'on a affaire à une émission de son ou de souffle, ou peut-être à un mouvement des lèvres (cf. le mot *špthm*). Deuxièmement, l'apposition avec *hwt* ainsi que

<sup>22</sup> Del Olmo Lete, p. 181.

la fonction de complément d'objet direct du verbe *tudn* suggèrent que *ghrt* désigne un phénomène audible. Troisièmement, l'étymologie arabe va dans le même sens (*ġahura* signifie « être public, divulgué ; parler haut, ouvertement », et *ġahura* « être sonore, retentissant »<sup>23</sup>). Ford, Niehr et del Olmo Lete rendent *ghrt* par des termes signifiant « du bruit » (*rumble, Lärm, hullabaloo*). Il convient cependant d'être prudent. Dans le champ sémantique pertinent pour les récitations magiques, s'il existe un verbe syriaque (*nšr*) dénotant parfois le lancement d'un cri ou de « sons brisés » à la manière de magiciens, les autres données vont dans le sens de formules murmurées (voir *rtn* et *lyhš*<sup>2</sup> en mandéen, *nhm* en syriaque, ainsi que *lhš* en hébreu ou *lhš* en akkadien<sup>24</sup>). On remarquera que parmi les trois facteurs relevés plus haut, seul le rapprochement avec l'arabe irait dans le sens d'un son émis d'une voix forte ; or une telle comparaison philologique ne suffit pas à assurer que le sens est exactement identique dans une autre langue sémitique.

## 2. Le verbe biblique גהר

Dans une note de bas de page de l'*editio princeps*, Bordreuil et Pardee signalent que la racine *ghr* apparaît dans les cycles d'Élie et d'Élisée mais notent que le sens retenu habituellement dans ces passages, « se pencher », ne convient pas à l'occurrence dans le texte ougaritique. Ils ajoutent cependant une remarque intéressante :

On ne manquera pas pourtant de remarquer que les deux passages [1 R 8.42 ; 2 R 4.34-35] ont un rapport avec des actes magiques, à savoir la guérison/résurrection et l'obtention de la pluie, et l'on doit envisager la possibilité que le rapport entre ces passages et le

<sup>23</sup> Cohen, Bron et Lonnet, p. 104.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. les données rassemblées par Ford, p. 141.

nouveau texte [ougaritique] soit plus étroit que l'interprétation classique ne le laisse penser<sup>25</sup>.

De fait, quelques années après la parution de l'*editio princeps*, plusieurs auteurs (en particulier M. Smith et Y. Avishur) sont revenus sur ce parallèle en concluant que le verbe גהר doit se comprendre, à la lumière du texte ougaritique, comme désignant un acte magique, consistant en l'émission d'un son<sup>26</sup>. Nous allons d'abord revenir sur le texte massorétique des deux passages concernés et nous interroger sur les raisons pour lesquelles ce verbe est traditionnellement traduit par « se pencher ».

## 2.1. L'interprétation traditionnelle

### 1 R 18.42

וַיַּעֲלֶה אַחָאָב לֶאֱכֹל וּלְשָׂתוֹת וְאֵלֶיהוּ עָלָה אֶל־רֹאשׁ הַכַּרְמֶל וַיִּגְהַר אַרְצָהּ וַיֵּשֶׁם  
פָּנָיו בֵּין בְּרָכָיו

*Et Achab monta pour manger et boire, et Élie monta au sommet du Carmel et... vers la terre et mit son visage entre ses genoux.*

### 2 R 4.34-35

<sup>34</sup> וַיַּעֲלֵל וַיִּשְׁכַּב עַל־הַיֶּלֶד וַיֵּשֶׁם פִּי עַל־פִּי וַיַּעֲנִי עַל־עֵינָיו וְכַפָּיו עַל־כַּפָּיו וַיִּגְהַר עָלָיו  
וַיִּחַם בָּשָׂר הַיֶּלֶד <sup>35</sup> וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּבֵית אַחַת הַנָּה וְאַחַת הַנָּה וַיַּעֲלֵל וַיִּגְהַר עָלָיו וַיִּזְוֹרֶר  
הַנַּעַר עַד־שָׁבַע פְּעָמִים וַיִּפְקַח הַנַּעַר אֶת־עֵינָיו

*Et il monta et se coucha sur l'enfant et mit sa bouche sur sa bouche, ses yeux sur ses yeux, ses mains sur ses mains, et il ... sur lui et la chair de*

<sup>25</sup> Bordreuil et Pardee, « Une incantation », p. 390 n. 17.

<sup>26</sup> M. Smith, « Recent Study of Israelite Religion in Light of the Ugaritic Texts », in K. Lawson Younger, *Ugarit at Seventy-Five*, Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 2007, p. 12-13 ; Y. Avishur, « Biblical Hebrew GHR and HWT RŠ'YM in Light of a New Ugaritic Text », *Leshonenu* 71 (2009), p. 57-71.

*l'enfant se réchauffa. Et il se remit à marcher de long en large, et monta et... sur lui, et l'enfant éternua sept fois et ouvrit les yeux.*

Les traductions modernes supposent qu'Élie « s'incline » vers le sol, tandis qu'Élisée « se penche » (ou autre geste analogue) sur le corps de l'enfant. Deux raisons peuvent justifier cette compréhension du verbe גהר. D'une part, le contexte de ses occurrences. En 1 R 18,42, une action en direction du sol est indiquée à l'aide du directionnel (אַרְצָה), et l'action suivante d'Élie consiste à placer sa tête entre ses genoux. On est donc fondé à penser que le verbe גהר dénote un mouvement vers le bas. En 2 R 4,34-35, toute une description indique qu'Élisée superpose son corps allongé sur celui de l'enfant, et l'on estime parfois que les expressions וַיִּשְׁכַּב עַל-וַיִּגְהַר עָלָיו et הִלָּדוּ sont parallèles. D'autre part, la racine sémitique *ghr* est souvent tenue pour un « doublet » de *ghn*, qui signifie « s'incliner, se pencher » en mandéen et « être proche » en arabe. Pour chacune des deux, il existe des attestations de sens liés au fait d'être obscur ou d'obscurcir, ainsi que de faire du bruit<sup>27</sup>. Les deux possèdent deux radicales en commun et pourraient provenir d'une même racine bilittère.

Pourtant, à l'examen, cet argumentaire se révèle fragile. En 2 R 4,34, la séquence de verbes au wayyiqtol dessine une série d'actions : (1) se coucher (וַיִּשְׁכַּב), (2) poser (וַיִּשֶׁם), (3) l'action dénotée par le verbe étudié (וַיִּגְהַר). Dès lors qu'Élisée est déjà couché sur l'enfant et qu'il a disposé plusieurs parties de son corps sur lui (la bouche, les yeux et les mains), quel sens y a-t-il à ajouter qu'il « se penche » ou « s'étend » sur lui ? N'est-ce pas déjà le cas<sup>28</sup> ? Le malaise transparaît dans le choix de certaines versions modernes, qui rendent le verbe par « il resta penché » (Pléiade), « il resta étendu » (*Traduction œcuménique de la Bible*), ce qui trahit son caractère apparemment redondant. Pour contourner cette difficulté, il faut postuler une nuance comme « se replier » (*Bible de Jérusalem*) ou « se blottir »<sup>29</sup>, en arguant du fait que l'enfant est de pe-

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, Bron et Lonnet, p. 104.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Hobbs, p. 42 (*to nestle down*). Voir aussi Montgomery et Gehman, p. 494, 498 ; Cogan et Tadmor, p. 55 (*to crouch*).

tite taille<sup>30</sup>. En admettant que ce mouvement de gymnastique paraît possible, l'exercice sémantique qui permet de parvenir à cette hypothèse de lecture du texte n'en révèle pas moins que la traduction de גהר se fait ici *ad hoc*. Quant à 1 R 18.42, il semble difficile de comprendre à quoi correspond l'acte d'Élie. Les explications selon lesquelles ce geste permet de s'humilier, de prier ou de se concentrer paraissent un peu courtes<sup>31</sup>. On a parfois évoqué l'idée d'une « magie imitative » pour faire venir la pluie<sup>32</sup>, mais sans argument décisif.

Par ailleurs, l'analyse rapportée plus haut de la racine *ghr* repose sur une base ténue. Tandis que les acceptions liées au fait d'être lumineux, voire aveuglant, ou encore sonore, sont bien attestées par des dialectes araméens et par l'arabe, les seuls indices en faveur du sens « se pencher » sont (1) l'hébreu biblique (fondé sur une traduction *ad hoc* de deux passages obscurs) et (2) le soqotri (« faire courber, soumettre »)<sup>33</sup>. Si *ghr* et *ghn* sont bien des racines « sœurs », cela pourrait aussi bien conduire à explorer les autres sémantismes associés, par exemple ceux liés à l'idée de « retentir ».

## 2.2. L'hypothèse fondée sur le parallèle ougaritique

Dans ces conditions, la proposition faite par Smith et Avishur paraît au moins aussi probable que l'analyse devenue traditionnelle. Cela est vrai au niveau du contexte, d'abord. En 2 R 4.34-35, Élisée, une fois son corps allongé sur celui de l'enfant, émettrait un bruit (*rumbling sound*<sup>34</sup>) et cet acte « magique » redonnerait vie à l'enfant. Ainsi s'expliquerait l'importance d'avoir la bouche disposée sur celle de l'enfant, de même que la réaction de ce dernier

<sup>30</sup> Cogan et Tadmor, p. 58. Cela suppose que נַעַר désigne bien ici un enfant, ce qui est possible (ce mot a un sens assez large).

<sup>31</sup> Voir par exemple Montgomery et Gehman, p. 306 ; Gray, p. 403-404 ; Würthwein, p. 214 ; Jones, p. 325-326.

<sup>32</sup> L'hypothèse, défendue par T. H. Robinson, est évoquée par Gray, p. 404.

<sup>33</sup> Cohen, Bron et Lonnet, p. 104.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, p. 13.

(il éternue), qui implique le même organe. Comme le relève Smith, « the immediate mechanism or process is left undescribed (does the prophet instill him with the *rûaḥ* of prophetic power ?)<sup>35</sup> ». En 1 R 18.42, le même chercheur suggère qu'Élie « makes some sort of sound with his mouth that acts in conjunction with the rainstorm, perhaps in imitation of or parallel with it<sup>36</sup> ». Cela fournit un appui inédit à l'hypothèse selon laquelle l'acte du prophète relève de la « magie imitative » afin de provoquer la venue de la pluie. Le fait même que la racine *ghr* apparaisse, d'une part, dans des récits où la dimension « magique » est soupçonnée depuis longtemps par les commentateurs, et, d'autre part, dans un texte d'incantation où elle renvoie à l'émission d'un bruit par des « sorciers », suggère qu'une réalité commune d'ordre « magique » est sous-jacente (ce qui n'exclut pas la possibilité de nuances entre les deux situations).

Au plan lexicographique, ensuite, cette interprétation de la racine *ghr* peut s'appuyer sur des attestations, en arabe et en mandéen, qui renvoient à l'idée d'émettre un son<sup>37</sup>. Si l'on considère que *ghr* est un doublet de la racine *ghn*, il faut aussi noter que cette dernière signifie « gronder, trépigner » en mandéen.

En somme, la découverte de la tablette KTU 1.178 a permis à des chercheurs d'avancer ces dernières années une interprétation des récits bibliques concernés qui semble meilleure que celle défendue traditionnellement. Cependant, ces savants n'ont pas tiré profit d'une autre donnée qui va dans le sens de leur hypothèse : le témoignage de certaines versions anciennes des livres des Rois.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Smith (*ibid.*) ajoute un argument : l'action d'Élie est dirigée vers la terre (אֶרֶץ), tout comme celle des « sorciers » de KTU 1.178 (*arṣa* si l'on vocalise). Cela ne semble cependant pas correspondre au sens du texte ougaritique : la personne qui s'y exprime souhaite que la « parole » ou « les sorciers » eux-mêmes soient « versés par terre ».

<sup>37</sup> Cohen, Bron et Lonnet, p. 104 : en arabe, *ḡahara* signifie « être public, divulgué ; parler haut, ouvertement », et *ḡahura* « être sonore, retentissant » ; en mandéen, *gharta* veut dire « cri, bruit ».

### 2.3. L'apport des versions anciennes

Si les orientalistes ont l'habitude de se fonder sur le texte massorétique lorsqu'ils renvoient à des textes bibliques, les exégètes sont de plus en plus conscients de l'importance des autres témoins textuels, spécialement dans l'ensemble Samuel-Rois. Du côté des traductions grecques, au texte du *Vaticanus* (LXX<sup>B</sup>) s'ajoute notamment la famille de manuscrits contenant le texte antiochien<sup>38</sup> (ou recension lucianique), LXX<sup>L</sup>, qui contient par endroits un texte grec plus proche de la Septante ancienne (ou Vieux grec). De surcroît, la Vieille latine (VL), traduction littérale de la Septante, apporte parfois des informations précieuses car elle a échappé à des révisions qui ont affecté les traditions grecques. Les traductions d'Aquila, de Symmaque et de Théodotion sont également précieuses<sup>39</sup>. Parmi les autres versions anciennes utiles, on trouve le Targum de Jonathan, en araméen.

À première vue, le texte grec semble aller dans le sens de l'interprétation traditionnelle du verbe נָחַךְ puisqu'à ses trois occurrences (1 R 18.42 ; 2 R 4.34 et 35) correspondent respectivement ἔκυψεν (« il s'inclina »), διέκαμψεν (« il se pencha ») et συνέκαμψεν (« il se pencha avec ») dans la LXX<sup>B</sup>. Mais le témoignage de la LXX<sup>L</sup> est plus complexe : si l'on retrouve ἔκυψεν en 1 R 18.42, on lit dans les deux autres versets une leçon double, autrement dit l'expression hébraïque y est rendue par deux formules grecques consécutives :

- en 2 R 4.34, καὶ συνέκαμψεν ἐπ' αὐτόν καὶ Ἰγλααδ ἐπ' αὐτόν

<sup>38</sup> Nous utilisons l'édition de N. Fernández Marcos et J. R. Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno de la Biblia Griega*, vol. 2. 1-2 Reyes (TECC), Madrid, Instituto de Filología del Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1992.

<sup>39</sup> Pour une histoire de la recherche, voir P. Hugo, *Les deux visages d'Élie. Texte massorétique et Septante dans l'histoire la plus ancienne du texte de 1 Rois 17-18*, OBO 217, Fribourg/Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006, p. 1-125 ; *id.*, « Le Grec ancien des livres des Règles. Une histoire et un bilan de la recherche », in Y. A. P. Goldman, A. van der Kooij et R. D. Weis (éd.), *Sôfer Mahîr. Essays in Honour of Adrian Schenker Offered by Editors of Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (VTSup 110), Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2006, p. 113-141.

- en 2 R 4.35, καὶ συνέκαμψεν ἐπὶ τὸ παιδάριον καὶ ἐνέπνευσεν ἐπ' αὐτόν

Par ces leçons doubles, un copiste a préservé des traductions distinctes qu'il avait trouvées dans des manuscrits. Ainsi, en 2 R 4.34, à la suite de καὶ συνέκαμψεν ἐπ' αὐτόν, il a recopié la variante καὶ Ἰγλααδ ἐπ' αὐτόν, et en 2 R 4.35, après καὶ συνέκαμψεν ἐπὶ τὸ παιδάριον, il a repris καὶ ἐνέπνευσεν ἐπ' αὐτόν d'une autre source. Or on constate, en 2 R 4.34, que Ἰγλααδ n'est pas une véritable traduction mais une translittération d'un mot hébreu incompris ; on rencontre également la variante Ἰγααδ dans un autre manuscrit, sans doute plus ancienne, car selon nous il pourrait s'agir d'une adaptation déformée de יְגִהֵר (en tenant compte de la confusion fréquence entre *dalet* et *resh*). Cela suggère que le verbe גִּהַר était inconnu d'un traducteur, et dans ce cas la leçon συνέκαμψεν pourrait bien être secondaire (un copiste aurait-il remplacé un texte intelligible par une translittération incompréhensible ?).

De manière plus frappante encore, en 2 R 4.35 la LXX<sup>L</sup> offre la leçon ἐνέπνευσεν (« il souffla »), à laquelle correspond, dans la Vieille latine, *inspiravit* ou *insufflavit* selon les manuscrits<sup>40</sup>. Le même verbe (ἐνέπνευσεν) apparaît également le cas dans la version d'Aquila en 2 R 4.34<sup>41</sup>. Selon P. Hugo<sup>42</sup>, le modèle hébraïque sous-jacent à cette leçon grecque était וַיִּנְּחָה (cf. Gn 2.7). Cette leçon aurait été censurée par un scribe (et remplacée par וַיְגִהֵר) pour un motif théologique : il ne paraissait pas acceptable qu'Élisée soit présenté dans le même rôle que Dieu lorsqu'il insuffla le souffle de vie dans les narines d'Adam. Or, à la lumière de ce que nous savons à présent sur la racine גִּהַר, il ne paraît plus nécessaire de postuler une telle révision délibérée du texte, ni une *Vorlage* différente de וַיְגִהֵר. Il est fort possible qu'un traducteur ait su que le verbe גִּהַר dénotait un acte opéré avec la bouche, émission de souffle ou de son. Peut-être n'avait-il qu'une idée

<sup>40</sup> Voir l'apparat critique de l'édition de N. Fernández Marcos et J. R. Busto Saiz, p. 91.

<sup>41</sup> Par ailleurs, certains témoins de la Septante contiennent en 2 R 4.35 la leçon ἐνεφύσησες, mais elle est hexaplaire (voir l'apparat critique de l'édition de Cambridge).

<sup>42</sup> Hugo, *Les deux visages d'Élie*, p. 127-175, spéc. 173.



vague de ce dont il s'agissait et le contexte immédiat, ou l'analogie avec la résurrection de 1 R 17.21 (où l'enfant retrouve sa נִפֶּשׁ), l'ont-ils orienté plus précisément vers le motif de l'insufflation. Dans ce cas, le sens exact de גָּהַר pourrait bien impliquer une émission de son, tandis que le traducteur aurait proposé un sens voisin, émission de souffle. Mais il est également envisageable que גָּהַר possède un sens large permettant d'englober ces nuances (rappelons qu'au plan comparatif et « phénoménologique », les parallèles avec l'incantation ougaritique orientaient plutôt vers les « murmures » de magiciens).

Si cette hypothèse est juste, alors quelques manuscrits grecs (appuyés par la Vieille latine) contiennent les traces d'une interprétation de גָּהַר proche de celle proposée récemment par des chercheurs sur la base du parallèle avec KTU 1.178. Cette compréhension du traducteur aurait été supplantée dans la plupart des manuscrits et des occurrences par une autre (συνέαμψεν), peut-être issue d'une analyse contextuelle ou, comme le pensent Montgomery et Gehman<sup>43</sup>, d'une lecture erronée de ויגהר au lieu de ויגהר (confusion entre *dalet* et *resh*) et d'une étymologie arabe. Seul le souci d'un scribe de préserver en 2 R 4.35 une leçon rencontrée dans une source (d'où une leçon double) nous aurait conservé un vestige de cette ancienne interprétation de la part de la Septante ; il faut y ajouter le témoignage d'Aquila.

Il existe cependant une objection possible : la leçon ἐνέπνευσεν n'aurait-elle pas pu surgir sous l'influence du récit de résurrection de 1 R 17.21, *indépendamment* de toute compréhension de la racine גָּהַר pour elle-même ? On remarquera toutefois que le verbe n'est pas le même, alors qu'on s'y attendrait s'il y avait eu assimilation : on lit ἐνεφύσησεν en 1 R 17.21 (LXX<sup>BL</sup>)<sup>44</sup>. De surcroît, une telle objection n'est pas envisageable dans le cas d'une autre traduction textuelle qui apporte un témoignage en-

<sup>43</sup> Montgomery et Gehman, p. 372.

<sup>44</sup> Signalons que Hugo envisage également une *Vorlage* ויפח en 1 R 17.21. Dans la mesure où le contexte immédiat évoque ensuite explicitement le retour de la נִפֶּשׁ de l'enfant, il est possible qu'ici le traducteur ait rendu le *hapax* ויפח *ad hoc*, comme la plupart des commentateurs le soupçonnent. Sur ce dernier verbe hébreu, voir aussi A. R. Davis, "Rereading 1 Kgs 17.21 in Light of Ancient Medical Texts", *JBL* 135 (2016), p. 465-481.

core plus éloquent. Le *Targum de Jonathan* rend en effet à deux reprises, en 2 R 4.34-35, l'expression hébraïque וַיִּגְהַר עָלָיו par la formule araméenne וַיִּלְהֵי עָלָיו. Or le verbe לָהַת signifie « haleter, souffler avec force »<sup>45</sup>. À notre connaissance, un seul commentateur, B. O. Long, a tenu compte de ce témoignage et traduit וַיִּגְהַר par « breathes heavily » en 2 R 4.35<sup>46</sup>. Comme nous l'avons vu, les données de la tradition grecque et le parallèle ougaritique confirment désormais cette ligne d'interprétation très minoritaire.

## Conclusions

Au terme de cette investigation, nous parvenons à plusieurs résultats qu'il vaut la peine de résumer ici :

- (1) En ce qui concerne le texte ougaritique KTU 1.178, il faut lire *ghrt* au début de la ligne 11 et non *ggrt* comme l'ont proposé Dietrich et Loretz. Une analyse philologique des lignes 8 à 11 conduit à y voir la mention d'un acte que pourraient commettre des « sorciers » : lancer des paroles maléfiques. Dans ce contexte, *ghrt* semble dénoter l'émission d'un bruit, bien que son caractère plus ou moins sonore ne soit pas clair. Les autres traditions sémitiques associent le plus souvent les incantations à des murmures de magiciens.
- (2) La racine *ghr* se rencontre également dans deux passages bibliques (1 R 18.42 ; 2 R 4.34-35). L'interprétation traditionnelle y voit des actions du type « se pencher », « se replier », voire « se blottir », mais une nouvelle interprétation a été

<sup>45</sup> Voir M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, Bar Ilan, Bar Ilan University Press, 1990, p. 278, et plus largement les données fournies par le *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* ([cal1.cn.huc.edu](http://cal1.cn.huc.edu), consulté le 28/02/2017). La très brève entrée du dictionnaire M. Jastrow (*A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, vol. 2, New York, Pardes, 1950, p. 694) semble se contenter de plaquer sur l'araméen l'interprétation traditionnelle des versets hébreux correspondants.

<sup>46</sup> B. O. Long, *2 Kings* (FOTL), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1991, p. 58-59 (il signale que le témoignage du Targum lui a été indiqué par J. Greenfield dans une communication personnelle). Long fait par ailleurs allusion aux autres versions mais sans les citer ni les discuter.

proposée récemment sur la base du parallèle avec l'incantation ougaritique : Élie puis Élisée émettraient un bruit, dans une démarche qu'on qualifie généralement de magique (il est difficile de dire si le geste est censé avoir un effet en lui-même ou constitue une forme de « prière en acte »)<sup>47</sup>. Nous avons essayé de montrer que cette analyse peut se prévaloir de fondements au moins aussi solides que la lecture traditionnelle aux plans contextuel et philologique. De surcroît, il paraît difficile d'attribuer au hasard l'apparition de la même racine *ghr* dans un texte qui évoque de manière certaine des pratiques magiques et dans des récits où la dimension « magique » a été soupçonnée depuis longtemps par les exégètes.

- (3) Les publications qui, à la lumière de la découverte de la tablette KTU 1.178, défendent cette nouvelle interprétation des récits bibliques ne se fondent que sur le texte massorétique. Or nous avons constaté que le texte antiochien, la Vieille latine, la traduction d'Aquila et le Targum de Jonathan conservent les traces d'une compréhension du verbe *ghr* qui converge largement avec cette lecture. Cela est vrai quelle que soit la difficulté à cerner de manière exacte le geste effectué (émission d'un bruit plus ou moins sonore, murmure, prononciation d'une formule, souffle...), qui pourrait bien être due, en réalité, à la souplesse du verbe.

En fin de compte, on peut se demander si, par delà les siècles, l'incantation ougaritique du Bronze récent et le geste prophétique de l'âge du Fer ne renvoient pas à une pratique religieuse analogue — à ceci près qu'elle est employée à des fins maléfiques dans le premier cas et bénéfiques dans le second.

<sup>47</sup> Voir R. Schmitt, "The Problem of Magic and Monotheism in the Book of Leviticus", *JHS* 8 (2008), article 11, p. 6-7, en ligne à l'adresse <http://jhsonline.org/jhs-article.html> (consulté le 13/07/2017). Dans le présent article, nous ne sommes pas entré dans le problème, passablement discuté en anthropologie religieuse, de la définition exacte de la magie, ni dans celui de la différence entre miracle et acte magique.

# The Pre-Priestly Abraham Narratives from Monarchic to Persian Times

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**Résumé.** La recherche récente sur le Pentateuque souligne que l'essentiel de l'histoire d'Abraham en Gn 12-25 est d'origine soit sacerdotale, soit post-sacerdotale. Néanmoins, quelques traditions pré-sacerdotales peuvent être identifiées, notamment en Gn 12,10-20 ; 13\* ; 16\* ; 18-19\*, des passages qui peuvent difficilement être lus comme formant une narration unifiée. Sur la base d'observations littéraires et historiques, l'article défend la thèse selon laquelle Abraham était à l'origine une figure du Sud judéen qui appartenait à divers groupes ethniques. Les traditions les plus anciennes qui nous soient parvenues, en particulier le récit d'Abraham et Lot, qui est associé à la promesse d'un fils et à sa naissance, étaient probablement transmises dans le sanctuaire de Mamré durant la période monarchique tardive. Plus tard, à l'époque exilique, où les sanctuaires judéens hors de Jérusalem reprennent de l'importance, les anciens récits d'Abraham ont été complétés par la tradition de la matriarche en danger en Gn 12,10-20 et celle de la naissance d'Ismaël en Gn 16\*. Ces deux passages, qui témoignent de liens importants, accentuent la dimension pluriethnique de la figure d'Abraham. Ce n'est qu'à la période perse que les récits pré-sacerdotaux sur Abraham ont été utilisés par les élites de Jérusalem en vue de justifier leurs prétentions culturelles et politiques sur la région du Sud.

\* This article is based on two papers presented by Oded Lipschits and Thomas Römer at a symposium on *The Politics of the Ancestors* (held January 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> 2016 at the University of Oldenburg, Germany). The papers will be published in the proceedings of the symposium. Observations at the symposium were that Lipschits's historical-archaeological approach and Römer's exegetical investigation resulted in similar conclusions about the origins of the Abraham tradition. These observations triggered the idea of merging the two texts into a combined piece. This was accomplished with the assistance of Hervé Gonzalez, who added further ideas and comments of his own.

## **Introduction**

The origins of the Abraham traditions have been much debated in biblical research. Since the classical Documentary Hypothesis has been called into question, new models have been proposed, which considerably limit the extent of pre-priestly Abraham traditions and narratives. The first part of this article proposes a brief presentation of recent scholarly discussion, pointing out that pre-priestly traditions can only be identified in Genesis 12:10–20; 13\*; 16\*; 18–19\*. These passages, however, can hardly be read as a cohesive narrative. The second part argues, based on literary and historical observations, that Abraham was originally a multi-ethnic figure from the South, whose early traditions were probably transmitted at the cult site of Mamre. The third part supports the view that the Abraham-Lot narrative, which is connected to the promise to Abraham of a son and to Isaac's birth, represents the earliest Abraham traditions, which were developed in the South during the late monarchic period. The fourth part of the article deals with the exilic period, when the local sanctuaries outside Jerusalem gained importance, and the early Abraham narratives were expanded with the tradition of the “endangered ancestress” in Genesis 12:10–20, as well as the birth of Ishmael in Genesis 16\*; these two passages, which display important connections, further emphasize the inclusive character of the figure of Abraham. At the end of the article, we argue that the pre-priestly narratives were eventually used by the Jerusalem elites during the Persian period to justify their religious and political claims over the South, which was cut off from Judah and became what is known from the Early Hellenistic documentation as the province of Idumea.

### **I. Pre-priestly traditions in the Abraham narrative**

Some scholars still continue to explain the formation of the Abraham narrative within the paradigm of the Documentary or New Documentary Hypothesis, like, e.g., Joel Baden, who assumes

that the J, E and P sources are consistent throughout the Patriarchal Narratives, as in the entire Pentateuch. In this view, there is no difference in the formation of all the narrative traditions of the Pentateuch.<sup>1</sup> But if we take into account new approaches of the Abraham narrative, we must disregard an a priori division of the text into three layers or sources (of which two would be “pre-priestly”). After all, at a relatively early stage of biblical criticism, many of the Abraham-cycle texts were considered problematic in terms of their assignment to J or E: Genesis 14, 15 and 24 were denied attribution to the Pentateuchal sources because of their style, content and references to younger texts.<sup>2</sup>

It is unnecessary to review this debate in detail. As for the priestly texts of the Abraham narrative, there is general agreement that P can be found in the following passages: Genesis 11:27–28a, 29–32; 12:4b.5; 13:6, 11\*, 12b; 16:3, 15–16; 17\*; 19:29; 21:1b–5\*; 23\*; 25:7–10.<sup>3</sup> We will not engage here in a discussion of whether some of the above P texts may be multilayered, such as Genesis 17, or whether some of them, like Genesis 23, perhaps do not belong to the so-called *Grundschrift*. It is possible to read the P passages as a complete and coherent Abraham-and-Sarah-narrative, in which, contrary to the Jacob-narrative, only few gaps in the text need to be filled. This means that, in Genesis 12–25\*, we can indeed reconstruct an independent P narrative. How-

<sup>1</sup> Joel S. Baden, *The Promise to the Patriarchs* (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> For Genesis 14, see: John A. Emerton, “Some Problems in Genesis XIV,” in *Studies in the Pentateuch* (VTS 41; Leiden: Brill, 1990), 73–102; Jan Alberto Soggin, “Abraham and the Eastern Kings: On Genesis 14,” in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots. Biblical Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield* (ed. Ziony Zevit, Seymour Gitin and Michael Sokoloff; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 283–291. For Gen 15, see: Otto Kaiser, “Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung von Gen 15,” *ZAW* 70 (1958): 107–125; André Caquot, “L’alliance avec Abram (Genèse 15),” *Semitica* 12 (1962): 51–66; for Genesis 24, see: Bernd Jørg Diebner and Hermann Schult, “Alter und geschichtlicher Hintergrund von Genesis 24,” *DBAT* 10 (1975): 10–17; Alexander Rofé, “La composizione de Gen. 24,” *BeO* 129 (1981): 161–165.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance Albert de Pury, “Genèse 12–36,” in *Introduction à l’Ancien Testament* (ed. Thomas Römer, Jean-Daniel Macchi and Christophe Nihan; Le Monde de la Bible 49; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 217–238, 224–225.

ever, this P narrative seems to imply older, written or oral narratives of Abraham and Sarah. This is suggested especially because of the shortness of most of the episodes. A verse such as 19:29 (“And when God destroyed the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham, and guided Lot out of the midst of the destruction, when he destroyed the cities in which Lot dwelt”) certainly does presuppose of its addressees knowledge of the narrative of Sodom’s destruction. The same probably holds true for the priestly account of the separation between Lot and Abraham as well as for the priestly birth narrative of Ishmael.

More complicated than the identification of the priestly texts is the decision about the date of the non-priestly texts in Genesis 12–25. Are they pre- or post-priestly? At least in European scholarship the issue of Genesis 14 and 15 might be relatively undisputed. The narrative of Abraham’s military campaign should be understood as a post-priestly text that wants to place Abraham in the context of world history. The text—which in some way breathes the spirit of the times of the Maccabees, but can hardly be dated so late—,<sup>4</sup> incorporates the encounter with the priest-king of Shalem, a Judean addition that wishes to place a reference to Jerusalem within the Patriarchal tradition and probably also to legitimize a theocratic ideal.<sup>5</sup> Genesis 15, in its present form, presupposes Genesis 14: this already becomes clear in the speech about the “booty” in 15:1, whereas the lexeme נָפֶל acquires the form נָפְלָה of Gen 14:20. But even scholars who reconstruct an earlier version in Genesis 15 that did not presuppose Genesis 14<sup>6</sup> agree

<sup>4</sup> For such a dating, see Soggin, *art. cit.* For a date in the Persian period: Volker Glissmann, “Genesis 14: A Diaspora Novella?,” *JSOT* 34 (2009): 34–45; Alon Wagner, *Genesis 14: Its Literary Growth, its Messages, and their Historical Contexts* (MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Gard Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek. Scribal Activity of Second Temple Times in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110* (BZAW 406; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Jan Christian Gertz, “Abraham, Mose und der Exodus. Beobachtungen zur Redaktionsgeschichte von Genesis 15,” in *Abschied vom Jahwisten. Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion* (ed. Jan Christian Gertz, Konrad Schmid and Markus Witte; BZAW 315; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2002), 63–81; Christoph Levin, “Jahwe und Abraham im Dialog: Genesis 15,” in *Gott und Mensch im Dialog. Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag* (ed. Markus Witte; BZAW 345; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 237–257.

that this *Urtext* should be later than P. It is one objective of Genesis 15, among others, to incorporate the Exodus tradition into the Abraham narrative.<sup>7</sup> By the self-introduction of Yhwh in Genesis 15:7 as “I am Yhwh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it,” the editor of this text transfers to Abraham Yhwh’s self-presentation as the god who leads out of Egypt in the Decalogue (Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6), and also turns him into an “exodic” figure. Simultaneously, it seems that Genesis 15:7 also seeks to correct the priestly Abraham version, because after the priestly genealogy in 11:31–32 Terah moves out of Ur of the Chaldeans whereas Abraham leaves not from Ur but from Harran, where his father had settled.

The post-priestly provenance of Genesis 24 should also be considered as proven, following Alexander Rofé’s investigations.<sup>8</sup> This chapter calls to mind the Book of Tobit, with its baroque style and the idea of guardian angels, and also shows linguistic and contextual indications for locating the narrative in the (probably late) Persian period.

Chapters 20–22\* should also be understood as post-priestly.<sup>9</sup> In the framework of the Documentary Hypothesis, these chapters were often assigned to the Elohist. A moment of truth in this attribution was the observation that they are closely interrelated

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Römer, “Abraham and the ‘Law and the Prophets,’” in *The Reception and Remembrance of Abraham* (ed. Pernille Carstens and Niels Peter Lemche; Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and its Contexts 13; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2011), 103–118; see already *idem.*, “Gen 15 und Gen 17. Beobachtungen und Anfragen zu einem Dogma der ‘neueren’ und ‘neuesten’ Pentateuchkritik,” *DBAT* 26 (1990): 232–247.

<sup>8</sup> Rofé, *art. cit.*, and Alexander Rofé, “An Enquiry to the Betrothal of Rebekah,” in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte. FS R. Rendtorff* (ed. Erhard Blum; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 27–39; see also Alexander Rofé, “Promise and Covenant: The Promise to the Patriarchs in Late Biblical Literature,” in *Divine Promises to the Fathers in the Three Monotheistic Religions. Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Jerusalem March 24–25<sup>th</sup>, 1993* (ed. Alviero Niccacci; ASBF 40; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1995), 52–59.

<sup>9</sup> As demonstrated especially by Matthias Köckert, “Gen 20–22 als nachpriesterliche Erweiterung der Vätergeschichte,” in *The Post-Priestly Pentateuch. New Perspectives on its Redactional Development and Theological Profiles* (ed. Federico Guiontoli and Konrad Schmid; FAT 101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 157–176.



and that Genesis 21–22 displays several parallels to the Isaac tradition. The “endangered ancestress” version in Genesis 20 is later than Genesis 12:10–20 and corrects the latter in the form of a midrash.<sup>10</sup> Genesis 20 also shows linguistic characteristics that are close to post-biblical Hebrew (like *מָה רָאִיתָ* in 20:10); also the often emended verse 20:4, in which Abimelech designates himself as a righteous “goy,” presupposes the meaning “pagan, gentile.”<sup>11</sup>

Following the priestly birth account of Isaac in 21:1–7, which probably integrates elements of an earlier narrative, the story about the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael in 21:9–21 belongs to a post-priestly layer. E. A. Knauf has pointed out<sup>12</sup> that the story was written to smoothen the discrepancy between the non-priestly text 16:12, according to which Ishmael lives in the desert, and 16:15 (P), in which Ishmael is in the house of Abraham.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, there are a number of parallels between this story and Genesis 22 that are better explained if both texts are assigned to the same author, or if Genesis 21:9–21 was composed later than Genesis 22. In any case, 21:9–21 also explains why Abraham has only one son in chapter 22.

The dispute between Abraham’s shepherds and the servants of Abimelech in 21:22–34, which has a parallel in Genesis 26:14b–33,

<sup>10</sup> See already John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 1975), 167 and 183. There is an ongoing discussion whether Genesis 12:1–10 or 26:1–11\* are the oldest of the three variants. Many scholars argue that 26:1–11 represents the oldest narrative because of its “profane” character; see, e.g., Ludwig Schmidt, “Die Darstellung Isaaks in Genesis 26,1–33 und ihr Verhältnis zu den Parallelen in den Abrahamerzählungen,” in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Pentateuch* (BZAW 263; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 167–223, 180–183. But 26:1–11\* has no plot at all and can be labeled as a “constructed narrative”; and 26:1 clearly presupposes the narrative in 12:10–20. See Irmtraud Fischer, *Die Erzeltern Israels. Feministisch-theologische Studien zu Genesis 12–36* (BZAW 222; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 1994), 176.

<sup>11</sup> Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 408–409, with notes 13 and 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ernst Axel Knauf, *Ishmael. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Palästinas und Nordarabiens im 1. Jahrtausend v.Chr.* (ADPV; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1989, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 18–25.

<sup>13</sup> For further arguments see Köckert, *art. cit.*, 166–173; Nadav Na’aman, “The Pre-Priestly Abraham Story as a Unified Exilic Work,” *SJOT* 29 (2015): 157–181, 163.

is hard to classify. The story was probably transferred from chapter 26 to chapter 21<sup>14</sup> in order to assign the few Isaac traditions to Abraham. The relationship of Genesis 20–22 to the Isaac texts in Genesis 26 needs a thorough examination that cannot be conducted within the framework of this article.

The Genesis 22 narrative about the disrupted sacrifice of Isaac and his replacement by a ram should also be understood as post-priestly.<sup>15</sup> This is primarily supported by the location of the sacrifice on “one of the mountains in the land of Moriah”—provided that this place name refers to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as in 2 Chronicles 3:1.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the question of the promise of a son, the emphasis on Isaac as the representative of the “Israel line” and the narrative’s abolition of human sacrifice all fit into Genesis 22’s Persian period setting.<sup>17</sup> A late date is further supported by the angel that operates from heaven, as in Genesis 21 but in contrast to Genesis 16.

Summing up, chapters 20–25 should be classified as priestly and post-priestly, aside from the probably earlier elements in the narrative of Isaac’s birth in 21:1–7\*. The question of the beginning of the pre-priestly Abraham narrative is also complicated. Abraham’s itinerary in 12:6–9 is, according to most scholars, an inverted mirror adaptation of Jacob’s travels, and therefore a Judean reworking of the Israelite Jacob tradition. The mention of Shechem in 12:6–7 can be explained as an allusion to Genesis 33:18–

<sup>14</sup> Schmidt, *art. cit.*, 221–223.

<sup>15</sup> See also Köckert *art. cit.*, 173–176. See already Timo Veijola, “Das Opfer des Abraham—Paradigma des Glaubens aus dem nachexilischen Zeitalter,” *ZThK* 85 (1988): 129–164 and Konrad Schmid, “Die Rückgabe der Verheißungsgabe. Der »heilsgeschichtliche« Sinn von Gen 22 im Horizont innerbiblischer Exegese,” in *Gott und Mensch im Dialog. Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag* (ed. Markus Witte; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 271–300.

<sup>16</sup> This is the *opinion communis*. In a forthcoming article, Christophe Nihan argues that the author of Genesis 22 chooses the mountain in “the land of Moriah” in order to allude to the Oak of Moreh, the site near Shechem (Gen 12:6). The term was coined to be understood by the Samaritans as a reference to Mount Garizim. 2 Chr 3:1 would then be a later Judean interpretation.

<sup>17</sup> Whether Genesis 22 is related to child sacrifice is debated. See Thomas Römer, “Le sacrifice humain en Juda et Israël au premier millénaire avant notre ère,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 1 (1999): 16–26.

20, but it also functions as an anticipatory reference to the end of the Hexateuch in Joshua 24, since Joshua's final speech also takes place in Shechem. According to Genesis 12:8, Abraham does not move directly to Bethel, but camps between Bethel and Ai. Either Bethel was not a functional sanctuary at the time of the composition of the text, or the author of the text considered this sanctuary illegitimate, and therefore pointed, by mentioning the ruins of Ai, to its anticipated, or already transpired, destruction. The itinerary in 12:6–9 probably presupposes the divine speech in 12:1–4a, which, according to Jean-Louis Ska, interrupts the priestly composition 11:27–32; 12:4–5, and is therefore a post-priestly insert using both priestly and Deuteronomistic terminology.<sup>18</sup> If Genesis 22 is considered post-priestly, the same should be suggested for Genesis 12,1–4a, because these verses are constructed as a parallel and preparation to Genesis 22.<sup>19</sup> The fact that Genesis 12:1–3 is quite late is also acknowledged by Köckert, who qualifies this passage as a “text that came into being probably close to the time of P.”<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, only Genesis 12:10–20; 13\*; 16\*; 18–19\* (excluding the discussion on Yhwh's righteousness in Genesis 18:18–19, 22–23\*), and maybe a short note on Isaac's birth in Genesis 21:1–7\*, qualify as pre-priestly texts.<sup>21</sup> These texts do not allow for the reconstruction of a continuous Abraham-and-Sarah narrative, which led de Pury to suggest that the “Abraham narrative has its

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Louis Ska, “The Call of Abraham and Israel's Birth-certificate (Gen 12:1–4a),” in Jean-Louis Ska, *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch* (FAT 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 46–66.

<sup>19</sup> This view, however, has been criticized by M. Köckert with the argument that the focus of Genesis 12:1–3 is limited to the sole book of Genesis. See Matthias Köckert, “Wie wurden Abraham- und Jakobüberlieferung zu einer ‘Vätergeschichte’ verbunden?,” *HeBAI* 3.1 (2014), 43–66, 63. Köckert refers to Konrad Schmid, *Erzväter und Exodus. Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments* (WMANT 81; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 105. But does every post-priestly insertion necessarily refer to a Pentateuchal large context? One should further note that the “great nation” (גוי גדול) in 12:2 appears again in Deuteronomy 26:5.

<sup>20</sup> Köckert, *art. cit.* (2015), 173.

<sup>21</sup> For a similar reconstruction, see also the history of research presented in Na'aman, *art. cit.*, 157–161.

starting point on a literary level, probably in the priestly version.”<sup>22</sup>

It is barely possible to read the above-suggested pre-priestly Abraham story as a cohesive narrative. The authors of the account of the promise of a son in Genesis 18 and his birth in 21:1–7\* do not seem to have knowledge of the existence of Ishmael. It is therefore possible to distinguish between two different parts in the pre-priestly Abraham tradition: the Abraham-Lot narrative, which is associated to the promise of a son for Abraham and to Isaac’s birth,<sup>23</sup> and the traditions of the “endangered ancestress” in Genesis 12:10–20 as well as of the birth of Ishmael in Genesis 16\*—two traditions that are closely connected as we will argue below.

The date of these traditions is debated, but most of the scholars mentioned above assume that this early stratum of the Abraham narrative developed in the pre-exilic period.<sup>24</sup> Some of them,

<sup>22</sup> De Pury, *art. cit.*, 214. Römer had followed a suggestion made by Irmtraud Fischer, which is to locate the beginning of the original Abraham tradition in 12:10–20. See: Thomas Römer, “Recherches actuelles sur le cycle d’Abraham,” in *Studies in the Book of Genesis. Literature, Redaction and History* (ed. André Wénin; BETL 155; Leuven: University Press – Peeters, 2001), 179–211, 193; Fischer, *op. cit.*, 339. This hypothesis was rightly criticized by Matthias Köckert, “Die Geschichte der Abrahamüberlieferung,” in *Congress Volume Leiden 2004* (ed. André Lemaire; VTSup 109; Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2006), 103–128, 212, footnote 58. It should probably be assumed, then, that the original opening of the Abraham-narrative was later replaced by Genesis 12:1–9 (see also Blum, *op. cit.*, 285–286); but for this, however, there are no literary indications.

<sup>23</sup> This confirms an assumption of earlier research; see especially Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901), 159f, who, however, wanted to add 12:1–9 as an introduction. See further Blum, *op. cit.*, 282–289.

<sup>24</sup> According to Blum (*op. cit.*, 273–289; 461–462 and also: Erhard Blum, “Abraham I. Altes Testament,” *RGG*<sup>4</sup> 1 [1998]: cols 70–74, 71–72), Genesis 13, which describes the strife between the shepherds of Abraham and Lot, is an exposition of the episodes in chapters 18–19. The themes in this early story are the birth of the promised heir and the genesis of the peoples of Israel, Ammon, and Moab. In his early work (*op. cit.* [1984], 273–297), Blum called the early Abraham and Jacob stories “*Vätergeschichte 1*” and dated it to the preexilic period. But his later work he gave up on this stage and dated the composition of the pre-priestly patriarchal story to the exilic period (*art. cit.* [1998], 71–73; cf. also Rainer Albertz, *Israel in the Exile. The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*

like Fischer, even assumed that these stories developed before the fall of the Northern Kingdom.<sup>25</sup> Other scholars did not commit to a particular date and accepted the option of a pre-exilic as well as an exilic date.<sup>26</sup> In the following, we will argue that, during the ex-

[Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003], 255-256). Reinhard Kratz observed that "the Yahwistic primeval history and the patriarchal history can be read as the foundational legend of the states of Israel and Judah in a non-state garb and as legitimation for the worship of the national God YHWH." Nevertheless, he suggested that the cycle was composed between the years 720 and 586 BCE, "in which there was no kingdom, but one people Israel alongside and in the kingdom of Judah" (Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* [London – New York: T&T Clark – Continuum, 2005], 273 and 265). For a similar interpretation of the story-cycle see Köckert, *art. cit.* (2014), 64-65. According to Thomas Römer, "Abraham Traditions in the Hebrew Bible outside the Book of Genesis," in *The Book of Genesis. Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr and David L. Petersen; Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012), 159-180, 161-173, 178-179, Ezek 33:24 and Isa 51:1-3, which refer to Abraham as ancestor, indicate a pre-exilic date of the early stratum of the Abraham tradition. Like Blum, Matthias Köckert (*art. cit.* [2006], 120-121; [2014], 69-70) dated the earliest stratum, which included the Abraham-Lot narratives (Gen 13\*, 18-19 and 21,1a.2\*.7), to the pre-exilic period. To this story, he suggested to add chapter 16, which was also written in the pre-exilic period, but the date of its integration into the early story-cycle is uncertain. In his earlier publication, Köckert (*art. cit.* [2006], 122-123) dated the combination of the Abraham and Jacob stories to the exilic period. In his recent work, however (Köckert, *art. cit.* [2014], 48-66), he suggested that the combination of the two cycles was made during the pre-exilic period. Na'aman dates all the patriarchal stories to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, claiming that "the author deliberately planted the patriarchs in Hebron and Beer-sheba, cities located in the midst of areas that the Edomites took possession of after the downfall of Judah. Just as he emphasized that the lost territories of the former Kingdoms of Israel and Judah are the inheritance of Israel, so did the seat of the patriarchs in the lost south Judahite regions make it clear that these districts are the possession of the patriarchs' descendants for all generations to come." (*art. cit.*, 172).

<sup>25</sup> Irmtraud Fischer (*op. cit.*, 339) dated the early stratum of the Abraham narratives to the period before the downfall of the Northern Kingdom, and suggested that it developed in the southern regions of the land. These stories were combined with the story cycle of Jacob by the addition of the Isaac story already in the pre-exilic period. Hence, the combined story of the three patriarchs and matriarchs was already written in the late monarchic period.

<sup>26</sup> David M. Carr speaks of a "proto-Genesis," and dates this work to "sometime in the pre-exilic or (more likely) early exilic periods" (David M. Carr,

ilic period, Genesis 12:10–20 and the birth of Ishmael in Genesis 16\* were added to preexisting Abraham traditions of the Iron Age that are attested in Genesis 13\* and 18–19\*.

## **II. Abraham in the pre-priestly traditions: a multi-ethnic figure from the South**

### **1. The figure of Abraham in biblical traditions**

#### ***An autochthonous figure***

The pre-priestly Abraham is not an emigrant. Only P (or to be precise the post-priestly text Genesis 15) turns the family of Abraham into emigrants migrating from Ur in the land of the Chaldeans to Canaan.<sup>27</sup> The link between Abraham and Mesopotamia can be explained by the intent to enable Abraham to emanate from a famous Mesopotamian city, while turning him into a role model for the Babylonian Golah. In the canonical shape of the Patriarchal narratives, Abraham crosses the entire “fertile crescent,” from Ur to Egypt. As he does so, before entering the land, he passes through regions in which Judean and Israelite diasporas were previously located; after his arrival in Canaan he goes down to Egypt which, in the Persian period, was also a home for Judean and Israelite diasporas. As such, he turns into an “ecumenical” figure<sup>28</sup> with whom all descendants of the former Judah and Israel could identify.

*Reading the Fractures of Genesis* [Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1996], 227 and 236).

<sup>27</sup> According to P, Abraham’s father leaves Ur, so that Abraham, according to Genesis 12 :1–3, leaves from Harran. The author of Genesis 15 apparently wanted to correct this idea.

<sup>28</sup> For this expression, see Albert de Pury, “Abraham: The Priestly Writer’s ‘Ecumenical’ Ancestor,” in *Rethinking the Foundations. Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible. Essays in Honour of John Van Seters* (ed. Steven L McKenzie and Thomas Römer; BZAW 294; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 2000), 163–181.

The pre-priestly Abraham, however, was probably an autochthonous figure, with roots in southern Palestine. This seems indicated in Ezekiel 33:23–24, where the autochthonous population's reference is criticized from a Golah perspective:

Then the word of the Lord came unto me: Son of man, the inhabitants of these ruins (יֹשְׁבֵי הַחֲרוּבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה) of the land of Israel say: Abraham was one (אֶחָד), and he owned the land (וַיִּירֶשׁ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ). But we are many; the land is given (נִתְּנָה) us as possession (לְמוֹרָשָׁה).

Such a saying, put in the mouth of a population that remained in the land, shows that Abraham served as a role model for this group. This was probably for the most part a rural, multi-ethnic population and not the exiled elite of Jerusalem. This quote, which should probably be dated to the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, shows that Abraham must have been an older figure, because it is implied that the addressees know him. The close relationship between the “one” Abraham and the land is not justified here by a promise of land, but by Abraham's “possession.” The root *y-r-š* is rarely found in the Abraham narrative (Genesis 15; 22:17; 24:60; with the meaning “to inherit” in Genesis 15:3–4 and 21:10), and probably originates from Ezekiel 33:24. It is also interesting that, in this exilic text, Abraham is not associated to Jacob, though the latter also appears in Ezekiel 37:25 and 28:25 in relation to the land.

The somehow younger oracle in Isaiah 51:1–3 adopts a positive attitude towards the “population of the ruins”:

Look at the rock (צוּר) from which you are carved, and at the cave, the cistern (מִקְבֵּת בּוֹר) from which you are dug. Look at Abraham, your father, and Sarah, who gave birth to you. He was one (אֶחָד) when I called him (קָרָאתִיו), and I blessed him (וַאֲבָרַכְהוּ)<sup>29</sup> and I made him many (וַאֲרַבְהוּ). Yhwh soothes Zion, he soothes all of her ruins

<sup>29</sup> For the vocalization of the MT and the rendering in the versions, see John Goldingay and David F. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55. Volume II* (ICC; London – New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 224. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has “I make (made) him fertile,” which also makes sense.

(כְּלִי-חַרְבָּתִיהָ), he turns her desert into Eden, and her steppe into the garden of Yhwh.

This text refers to Ezekiel 33:24 and corrects it with regards to the “ruins.” Contrary to Ezekiel, however, Isaiah 51:1–3 does not deal with the land but with Abraham’s offspring. This explains why Sarah is mentioned here.<sup>30</sup> We cannot say whether it already implies a written (priestly) version of the Abraham story.<sup>31</sup> The root *q-r-ʿ* does not appear in the context of Abraham’s call in Genesis 12. In Genesis 13:10, there is a parallel to the expression “garden of Yhwh,” but there it designates the land that Lot chose (the region of Sodom and Gomorra).

If the “rock” in Isaiah 51:3 refers to Abraham, the oracle may also contain a reference to the autochthonous character of the couple Abraham and Sarah. This would reflect a mythological concept according to which “autochthonous humans are born out of rock, and brought out from the rock or the cave.”<sup>32</sup> But it is also possible that the rock or the cave is Abraham’s tomb at Mamre/Hebron.<sup>33</sup>

The pre-priestly Abraham served during the Babylonian period as a figure of legitimation of a rural and un-deported population. The traditions linked to him revolve around land property

<sup>30</sup> This is the only mention of Sarah in the Hebrew Bible outside the Book of Genesis.

<sup>31</sup> As argued by Köckert, *art. cit.* (2006), 206.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Volz, *Jesaja. II* (Kommentar zum Alten Testament IX; Leipzig: A. Deichert’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1932), 111; further bibliography for this opinion in 110, footnote 1.

<sup>33</sup> So de Pury, *art. cit.* (2009), 233. See already Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (HKAT III/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 344–345. Another possibility is to correlate the rock with Zion, see Odil Hannes Steck, “Zions Tröstung. Beobachtungen und Fragen zu Jesaja 51,1–11,” in *Die hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte. Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Erhard Blum, Christian Macholz and Ekkehard W. Stegemann; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990), 257–276, reprinted in Odil Hannes Steck, *Gottesknecht und Zion. Gesammelte Aufsätze zu Deuterjesaja* (FAT 4; Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 84–85. The mention of Abraham and Sarah makes this solution less probable.



and offspring.<sup>34</sup> Both are important themes in the ancient Near East as well as in Greece, and both appear in the pre-priestly Abraham narratives. Before returning to this subject, let us take a brief look at Abraham and Jacob's different political functions. It is remarkable that Abraham appears in the so-called Deuteronomistic History<sup>35</sup> and in the Book of Jeremiah only in late insertions.<sup>36</sup> This already provides an indication that the Jerusalemite elite did not need these stories for their reconstruction of Israel's and Judah's history.

### ***A non-national, inclusive and multi-ethnic figure of the South***

Genesis 32:23–32 tells how Jacob receives his new name, “Israel.” This legend is used to turn the patriarch into a “national” patriarch, an ancestor of the Kingdom of Israel. This probably happened during the reign of Jeroboam II, if Hosea 12 is read as a critical statement against the officialization of the Jacob tradition.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See Bernard Gosse, *Structuration des grands ensembles bibliques et intertextualité à l'époque perse* (BZAW 246; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 1997, 92–94, and Israel Finkelstein and Thomas Römer, “Comments on the Historical Background of the Abraham Narrative. Between ‘Realia’ and ‘Exegetica’,” *HeBAI* 3/1 (2014): 3–23, 19.

<sup>35</sup> The few mentions of the Patriarchs in Joshua, Samuel and Kings are post-dtr inserts, see Thomas Römer, *Israels Väter. Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition* (OBO 99; Freiburg (CH) – Göttingen: Universitätsverlag – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> The only appearance of Abraham in the MT of Jeremiah (33:26) is probably part of a late addition (vv. 14–26 are lacking in LXX); see for instance Johan Lust, “The Diverse Forms of Jeremiah and History Writing with Jer 33 as a Test Case,” *JNSL* 20/1 (1994): 31–48.

<sup>37</sup> For the critical assessment of the Jacob tradition in Hosea 12 and its dating to the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, see Albert de Pury, “Hosea 12 und die Auseinandersetzung um die Identität Israels und seines Gottes,” in *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (ed. Walter Dietrich and Martin Klopfenstein; OBO 139; Freiburg (CH) – Göttingen: Universitätsverlag – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 413–439.

Abraham, on the other hand, was never an “official” patriarch of the Kingdom of Judah. He is not the ancestor of the different tribes or clans that form Judah. P reports in Genesis 17, however, a name change for him and Sarah, probably inspired by Genesis 32. But Abraham’s new name is by no means related to a national function. The change from Abram to Abraham is explained theologically with the statement that the patriarch will become the father of many peoples. Abraham is not thereby exactly turned into a Judean ancestor. The pre-priestly texts already indicate that his two sons do not belong to the same ethnic group. Thus, Abraham was a reference person for certain Judean but also non-Judean, “Arab” groups, which had been in contact with each other in the Negev, southern Hebron Hills and the southern Shephelah. As de Pury underlines, Hebron appears in the David narrative “as the assembly point for all groups (...), the ones living in the Negev, in the mounds of the lowlands as well as in the highlands, if not even for the far neighbors in Transjordan, Arabia and Sinai.”<sup>38</sup> Consequently, Abraham was a figure who was remembered in the south of Judah, but not as the patriarch of the kingdom of Judah.

Though, in some prophetic texts, Jacob and Abraham do appear together (Isa 29:22; 41:8; 63:16 [Israel]; Mi 7:20; cf. Ps 105:6) and probably symbolize the north (Israel) and the south (Judah), such a use of Abraham is an exception and a later development. The original political function of the figure of Abraham, as it was shared by various groups in the south, thus differs distinctly from that of Jacob.

## **2. The background of the pre-priestly Abraham traditions from the perspective of the historical *longue durée***

This picture of Abraham as an autochthonous figure, important for southern tribes, is consistent with a *longue durée* perspective on the geopolitical history of the region.

<sup>38</sup> De Pury, *art. cit.* (2009), 233.

By the second millennium BCE there were two main geopolitical centers in the hill country—the kingdom of Shechem and the kingdom of Jerusalem. The historical and archaeological data clearly show that the kingdom of Shechem was the larger and more populated one, with areas better ruled over from the agricultural perspective, and closer to the rich valleys and the important cities and roads that existed during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. It controlled the Northern hill country, reached as far north as the Jezreel Valley, as far east as the Gilead and as far to the southwest as Gezer. These are precisely the historical borders of the Kingdom of Israel prior to its expansion during the days of the Omrides. The first millennium BCE Kingdom of Israel is the direct consequence and continuation of the Labaya kingdom of Shechem of the Late Bronze Age.<sup>39</sup>

The Kingdom of Jerusalem was much smaller and less active, and the main debate between scholars concerns the territory ruled by this hilly fortress during the second millennium BCE. Naʾaman,<sup>40</sup> following Alt,<sup>41</sup> reconstructed a very small city-state that ruled solely over its immediate territory.<sup>42</sup> It seems quite

<sup>39</sup> Israel Finkelstein, “The Last Labayu: King Saul and the Expansion of the First North Israelite Territorial Entity,” in *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Naʾaman* (ed. Yaira Amit, Ehud Ben Zvi, Israel Finkelstein and Oded Lipschits; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 171–177.

<sup>40</sup> Nadav Naʾaman, “Canaanite Jerusalem and Its Central Hill Country Neighbours in the Second Millennium B.C.E.,” *UF* 24 (1992): 275–291; *idem*, “The Contribution of the Amarna Letters to the Debate on Jerusalem’s Political Position in the Tenth Century B.C.E.,” *BASOR* 304 (1996), 17–27; *idem*, “Jerusalem in the Amarna Period,” in *Jérusalem Antique et Médiévale: Mélanges en l’honneur d’Ernest-Marie Laperrousaz* (eds. Caroline Arnould-Béhar and André Lemaire, Paris, 2011), 31–48.

<sup>41</sup> Albrecht Alt, “Die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina (1925),” in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel I* (München: Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953), 89–125, 107–108.

<sup>42</sup> Zechariah Kallai and Haim Tadmor, “Bit-Ninurta = Beth-Horon — On the History of the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the Amarna Period (Hebrew),” *Erls* 9 (1969): 138–147, followed by Israel Finkelstein, claimed that Jerusalem ruled over all the southern hill country, as far as the Beersheba–Arad Valleys, including the Hebron hills. See: Israel Finkelstein, “The Sociopolitical Organization of the Central Hill Country in the Second Millennium BCE,” in: *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990 — Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology*,

clear that the traditional borders of the kingdom of Jerusalem were small and never included the southern Judean Hills, i.e. the area of Hebron, which was the heart of the local tribe or clans of Judah according to the biblical descriptions. At least during the Late Bronze Age, Jerusalem was an isolated fort that controlled a sparsely populated area, with a probably very small number of 'Apiru groups and semi-nomadic clans roaming its territory to the south and west of it.<sup>43</sup>

In the Middle Bronze Age, Hebron was the main urban center in the southern Hill country. Tell er-Rumeideh (the location of ancient Hebron) was well fortified, with a strong wall that surrounded an area of about 24–30 dunams.<sup>44</sup> A cuneiform text discovered at the site<sup>45</sup> was dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>46</sup> The frequent mention of the word “king” in this inscription indicates that the tablet originally belonged to the local king’s archive; sheep are mentioned and they—partly or entirely—served for sacrifice, indicating that a cult place existed either in the city or nearby.<sup>47</sup> During the 17<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, Hebron was the political and military center of the southern hill country while Jerusalem was the center of the central hill region. It was destroyed in an unknown period and was probably abandoned during the Late Bronze Age. During the same period when Hebron existed as the

*Supplement* (eds. A. Biran and J. Naveh, Jerusalem, 1993), 110–131; “The Territorio-Political System of Canaan in the Late Bronze Age,” *UF* 28 (1996): 221–255, 228–229, 234–235 and 255. Their reconstruction, however, does not account well for the main archeological and epigraphic data from the Southern region (see below).

<sup>43</sup> Na’aman, *art. cit.* (1992), 280–288.

<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey R. Chadwick, *The Archaeology of Biblical Hebron in the Bronze and Iron Ages: An Examination of the Discoveries of the American Expedition of Hebron* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 1992), 56–76, 131–133; Avi Ofer, “‘All the Hill Country of Judah’: from a Settlement Fringe to a Prosperous Monarchy,” in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (ed. Israel Finkelstein; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 95–96, 100, 110; Na’aman, *art. cit.* (1992), 280–288.

<sup>45</sup> Avi Ofer, “Excavations at Biblical Hebron (Hebrew),” *Qadmoniot* 87–88 (1989): 88–93, 91–93.

<sup>46</sup> Moshe Anbar and Nadav Na’aman, “An Account Tablet of Sheep from Ancient Hebron,” *Tel Aviv* (1986–1987): 3–12.

<sup>47</sup> Na’aman, *art. cit.* (1992).

main urban center of the south, Beth-Zur existed to its north, also fortified with a strong wall, surrounding an area of about 8–15 dunams. Beth-Zur was destroyed at the end of the Middle Bronze Age and was also deserted during the Late Bronze Age.

During the Late Bronze Age, the main urban center of the south was Khirbet Rabûd—biblical Debir.<sup>48</sup> The ca. 50 dunam site was well fortified by a strong wall. Four Late Bronze Age strata were unearthed at this site during archaeological excavations.

The archaeological surveys conducted in the Judean hills indicate that, during the Late Bronze II, the area between Jerusalem and Khirbet Rabûd (about 40 km) was uninhabited. The two mountain-located and fortified towns were territorially disconnected.

The location of Debir in the southern Judean hill country in the Late Bronze II is similar to that of Hebron in the Middle Bronze II: a major city within a partly or entirely non-sedentary area. Just as Hebron was an independent city-state in the Middle Bronze II, so was Debir in the Late Bronze II. All written and archaeological data indicate that the independent city-state of Debir dominated the southern hills of Judah in the Late Bronze II. Just like Hebron, Debir was a fortified stronghold in the middle of an unpopulated and unsettled area.<sup>49</sup> This situation also corresponds to local Judahite traditions according to which the clan that settled in the Hebron area was Caleb's (cf. Num 13–14 and Josh 14), while another clan—Othniel's—settled in and around Debir (Josh 15:15–17).

<sup>48</sup> For the excavations of Khirbet Rabûd, see Mosheh Kochavi, "Khirbet Rabûd = Debir", *Tel Aviv* 1 (1974): 2–33; A. Ofer, *art. cit.*, 96, 110.

<sup>49</sup> The territories of the kingdoms of Middle Bronze II Hebron and Late Bronze II Debir must have encompassed the Beer-sheba–Arad Valleys. The sites of Tel Masos and Tel Malhata in the south and Beth-Zur in the north were secondary towns within the Middle Bronze II kingdom of Hebron. The territory of Debir, on the other hand, was almost entirely uninhabited. Its economy was based on agriculture and animal husbandry and it kept close relations with the pastoral groups located in its highland and Negebite territories. Its close neighbors were the city-states of Jerusalem in the north and Lachish in the west. Whether there were other small city-states on its western border remains unknown.

In biblical traditions of Israel's early history and during the early Iron Age, Jerusalem (Jebus) is consistently disconnected from the hill country of Judah. It should be remembered that, according to the biblical record, the family of David lived inside the territory of the kingdom of Jerusalem, in close proximity to the city itself—far from the tribal territory of Judah in the Hebron Hills.<sup>50</sup>

However, from the stories on his early career, it seems that David understood that the clans of Judah could give him the support he needed against Saul and the elite of the kingdom of Jerusalem. He continued to send them gifts and assist them (1 Sam 30:26, etc.). The support of the elders of Judah led them to ask David to become their leader prior to the conquest of Jerusalem and the establishment of the Davidic kingdom. In this case, the stories of David as the leader of an 'Apiru group who became the leader of a tribal territory is similar to that of Jephtah in the Book of Judges (Judg 11).

According to the biblical tradition, the territory of Saul had been in the Benjaminite region and probably included Jerusalem. Following his death, the areas of the "Kingdom of Jerusalem" and that of Hebron/Debir were united under the leadership of David, whose center was in Hebron. In the narrative of David's rise, Jerusalem is presented as a town with a foreign population—the Jebusites—, just as the western area of Benjamin was portrayed as Hivite foreign territory (Josh 9).

This short overview shows that the biblical traditions of the early history of Israel consistently separated Jerusalem from the southern hill country of Judah.<sup>51</sup> The integration of the Southern territory into the kingdom of Jerusalem, the establishment of the territorial kingdom of Judah, and the later integration of the lowland into that kingdom—all during the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE—was one of the most important achievements of the

<sup>50</sup> Recently, Hermann Michael Niemann ("Juda und Jerusalem. Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Stamm und Stadt und zur Rolle Jerusalems in Juda," *UF* 47 [2016]: 147–190) has argued that there never was a "historical tribe of Judah," but different clans living in Judahite territory. The tribe of Judah was invented in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE in order to legitimize the Davidic dynasty.

<sup>51</sup> See also Niemann, *art. cit.*, 175–176.

Davidic kings; geographically, this was *not* natural to this region. Attention must be paid to the fact that this unification of the two territories is described in the Books of Samuel as a conquest of Jerusalem by the tribal leader of Judah from his center in Hebron, and this conquest was only part of David's long struggle against the leading families of the Benjaminite region.

From the very moment of the creation of the kingdom of Judah, and until the Babylonian exile, the city of Jerusalem was the center of a kingdom that encompassed an extensive territory, vastly larger than the Judean hills. Yet, in the kingdom's administrative framework, Jerusalem was the center of a small district (described as סביב/י ירושלים) whereas the hill country of Judah was a large, separate district (called ההר).<sup>52</sup>

This unification of the two regions was a one-time occurrence; it had never transpired before, and it terminated with the end of the Davidic dynasty and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The geopolitical outcome of this destruction was the renewed separation of the two regions. The province of Yehud included precisely the territory of the former Middle and Late Bronze Ages kingdom of Jerusalem, while the traditional area of the tribe of Judah was cut off from Jerusalem and very soon became part of the province of Idumaea. The Northern border of Idumaea was south of Beth-Zur, and the Beer-sheba–Arad Valley and the southern Shephelah were included in this territory. This border system survived throughout the Persian and early Hellenistic periods. Even the Hasmonean and Roman conquests did not change the place of this area within the overall administrative division of the hill country and the Shephelah. In the time of John Hyrcanus (134–105 BCE), Idumaea was conquered by the kings of Jerusalem, converted by force and annexed as a separate administrative district to the Hasmonean kingdom. This administrative division remained in power until the destruction of the Second Temple. Later on, the administrative detachment of Jerusalem

<sup>52</sup> Nadav Na'aman, "The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah," *Tel Aviv* 18 (1991): 3–71, 13–16.

and the area of Hebron remained intact until the early Ottoman period.<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, an examination of the *longue durée* geopolitical situation in the hill country indicates that for more than a thousand years—from the destruction of the First Temple until the end of the Byzantine period—, in various historical situations and under different political powers, Jerusalem and the southern Judean hill country were part of different—at first political and later administrative—entities.

German scholarship postulated the existence of a “Greater Judah” in the pre-monarchic period. According to Alt, Noth, Zobel and others, a confederation of six small clans existed in the pre-monarchy period: Judah, Simeon, the Calebites, the Kenazites, the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites.<sup>54</sup> Other scholars, such as Mowinckel<sup>55</sup> and de Vaux,<sup>56</sup> claimed that the tribe of Judah did not exist before the time of David and that the unification of the clans in the Hebron hills happened only under David’s leadership in Hebron. Archaeology can contribute to this debate, since it is now clear that the Judean hill country was sparsely populated in the Late Bronze Age and the Iron I. In light of this data, it is reasonable to assume that the crystallization of a territorial-tribal entity with the name “Judah” around Hebron only followed the rise of a

<sup>53</sup> Na’aman, *art. cit.* (1992), 282–283.

<sup>54</sup> Albrecht Alt, *The God of the Fathers* (Essays on Old Testament History and Religion; Oxford: 1966), 53–54; Martin Noth, *Das System der zwölf Stämme Israels* (BWANT IV/1; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1930), 107–108; Hans-Jürgen Zobel, “Beiträge zur Geschichte Groß-Judas in früh- und vordavidischer Zeit,” in *Congress Volume Edinburgh 1974* (VT.S 28; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 253–277.

<sup>55</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, “‘Rahelstämme’ und ‘Leastämme,’” in *Von Ugarit nach Qumran. Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen und altorientalischen Forschung*, Otto Eissfeldt zum 1. September 1957 (ed. Johannes Hempel and Leonard Lost; BZAW 77; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1958), 129–150, 137–138.

<sup>56</sup> Roland de Vaux, *Histoire ancienne d’Israël. Des origines à l’installation en Canaan* (Études bibliques; Paris: Gabalda, 1971), 509–510. See also Tomoo Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel: A Study on the Formation and Development of Royal-Dynastic Ideology* (BZAW 142; Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 1977), 65–66.



strong leader in Hebron, and that a figure like David might have played a major role in this process.<sup>57</sup>

This *longue durée* geopolitical picture seems to confirm the hypothesis that the Abraham traditions grew inside the Southern territory of Judah, around the site of Hebron. In addition, 2 Samuel 5:3 seems to refer to a cult place in Hebron, and the same cultic place appears in the excuse of Absalom when he planned to revolt against his father David (2 Sam 15:7). The Abraham traditions in Genesis mention more specifically the cult place of Mamre in Hebron.<sup>58</sup> This cult place might be identified as one of the places where these traditions were transmitted and developed.

The original location of Mamre remains obscure. According to Genesis 13:18, Mamre is located in or near Hebron and could therefore have been a sanctuary that was connected to the city. Its identification with *Ḥaram Ramet el-Khalil*, located about 3 km north of Hebron, probably goes back to the time of King Herod, when an impressive cultic site was built there.<sup>59</sup> This building must have preserved a cultic tradition whose sources go back in

<sup>57</sup> See, however, the skeptical remarks by Niemann, *art. cit.*, who thinks that the biblical texts do not reflect a historical reality, but should be taken as an ideological reconstruction.

<sup>58</sup> Mamre is not mentioned outside of Genesis (13:18; 18:1; then 23:17, 19; 25:9; 49:30 and 50:13 as well as in personal names in Genesis 14:13, 21). This observation led Roland de Vaux to conclude that this sanctuary was considered as unorthodox by later editors. See Roland de Vaux, "Mambré," *Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément V* (1957): 753–758.

<sup>59</sup> The history of the site at *Ḥaram Ramet el-Khalil* in its pre-Roman phases is not clear. For a summary of the archaeological picture, and for the results of the excavations that were conducted in this place in 1984–1986, see Yitzhak Magen, "Elonei Mamre—Herodian Cultic Site [Hebrew]," *Qadmoniot* 24 (93–94) (1991), 46–55; *idem*, "Mamre. A Cultic Site from the Reign of Herod," in *One Land—Many Cultures. Archaeological Studies in Honor of Stanislo Loffreda OFM* (ed. G.C. Bottini, L. Di Segni and D. Chrupcala; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2003), 245–257. For the Mader 1926–1928 excavations see: Andreas Evaristus Mader, *Altchristliche Basiliken und Lokaltaditionen in Südjudaä: archäologische und topographische Untersuchungen* (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums VIII/5–6; Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1918); *idem*, *Mambre: die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen im heiligen Bezirk Râmet el-Ḥalîl in Südpalästina: 1926–1928* (Freiburg im Breisgau: E. Wewel, 1957). See also Wolfgang Zwickel, "Das Heiligtum von Mamre," *BN* 101 (2000): 27–28.

time and were probably linked from an unknown period to the Abraham stories. The option that, in the Roman period, the origin of these traditions moved to the site of *Ḥaram Ramet el-Khalil* from the nearby site of *Khirbet Nimra*, as suggested by Detlef Jericke,<sup>60</sup> is relevant, especially in light of the similarity of the names Mamre and Nimra. It is difficult, however, to accept archaeological arguments for dating the story of Abraham at Mamre to the Persian period, as suggested by Jericke, especially since the large administrative structure that was excavated at *Khirbet Nimra* and dated to the Persian period was not a cultic place.<sup>61</sup> This structure probably has no connection to the Abraham traditions, and its date to the 6<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE should not be used to claim that the Mamre-Abraham tradition belongs to the Persian period.<sup>62</sup> The biblical text mentions a sacred grove of oaks, where an open space altar was erected. Archaeology is very limited in detecting open space cult sites, and even if structures were built around it, one cannot base the date of biblical traditions on such limited and often occasional finds. Since the date of the administrative structure in *Khirbet Nimra* has nothing to do with the date of the Abraham traditions, textual analysis—as complicated and uncertain as it is—should be the basis for the discussion.

Let us now try to locate more precisely the earliest Abraham traditions against this socio-historical and archeological background.

<sup>60</sup> Detlef Jericke, *Abraham in Mamre. Historische und exegetische Studien zur Region von Hebron und zu Genesis 11,27–19,38* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 17; Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2003), 35–52, 234–235, 301.

<sup>61</sup> Hanany Himzi and Zion Shabtai, “A Public Building from the Persian Period at Jabel Nimra (Hebrew),” in *Judea and Samaria Research Studies. Proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting* (ed. Z.H. Ehrlich and Y. Eshel; Kedumim-Ariel: The Research Institute of Judea and Samaria, 1993), 65–86.

<sup>62</sup> Pace Jericke, *op. cit.*, 234–235, 301. See also Na’aman, *art. cit.* (2015), 175.

### III. The early Abraham narrative at the cult site of Mamre during the late monarchic period

#### 1. Abraham and Lot (Gen 13\*; 18–19\*)

The origin of the transmission history of the Abraham-Lot narrative resides in the tradition of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra, which is referenced in several biblical texts that do not mention the figure of Lot.<sup>63</sup> The original tradition was about the destruction of mythical cities by the Dead Sea in primeval times. This tradition was then developed narratively and the figure of Lot was integrated.

The origins of the figure of Lot are obscure, as is the etymological meaning of his name.<sup>64</sup> We must assume that, for the audience of the Abraham-Lot tradition, Lot was known as the patriarch of the Moabites and Ammonites, with whom the tradents of this tradition felt connected. In the stories of Genesis 13 and 18–19, one may detect a certain sense of sympathy for Lot, which is however also ensconced in a tinge of irony and superiority.

The Abraham-Lot tradition draws parallels between the two men with regards to land, hospitality and offspring.

#### *The land conflict and its solution in Genesis 13\**

The content of the original narrative of Genesis 13, which roughly encompasses verses 2, 5, 7–11a\*, 12b–13 (14a.17) 18a,<sup>65</sup> is a territorial conflict solved peacefully thanks to Abraham's generous offer.

<sup>63</sup> Deut 29:22; 32:32; Isa 1:9f.; 3:9; 13:19; Jer 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Ezek 16:44–48, Am 4:11; Zeph 2:9.

<sup>64</sup> The root means something like “disguise.” There may be a relation to the name Lotan, which appears in Genesis 26 and 1 Chronicles 1:38–39, as an offspring of Esau.

<sup>65</sup> Vv. 6, 11b and 12a are traditionally assigned to P (pace Blum, *op. cit.* [1984], 285). Vv. 1, 3–4, 7b, 14–17, 18b seem to belong to the same level as 12:1–9. See also (with somewhat different results) Theodor Seidl, “Conflict and Conflict Reso-

In contrast to the conflict between Jacob and Laban, in which Jacob tries to flee and which is only reconciled with a pact, Abraham takes on a more generous role with his “brother” Lot.<sup>66</sup> He allows Lot to choose his territory, and the latter chooses the Jordan Valley. The description of this valley as the “garden of Yhwh” shows the tradent’s etiological interest: the explanation of the strange and eerie terrain around the Dead Sea. The idea of the narrative is that this area was very fertile and attractive before its destruction.

With his integration into this region, the nomad Lot (see v. 5: sheep, goats and tents) is transformed into a city dweller (12b: “Lot settled in the cities of the valley and moved with his tent until Sodom”); and exactly this change will become disastrous for him. Abraham, on the other hand, settles at the holy tree (here the singular of the LXX seems preferable) in Mamre, where the story of Genesis 18 takes place (v. 1).

Genesis 13 apparently pleads for a peaceful relationship between the groups presented by Abraham, which were connected to Hebron, the “center” of the southern Palestine hill country,<sup>67</sup> and the Moabites and Ammonites, represented by Lot. This position contradicts discourses in the so-called Deuteronomistic History, in several prophetic texts (Isa 15–16; 25:10; Jer 48; Am 2:10–11, etc.) as well as in some Psalms (Psa 83:6–9), which depict an aggressive attitude towards the Moabites and the Ammonites.<sup>68</sup>

lution: Inner Controversies and Tensions as Places of Israel’s Self-Conception in the Patriarchal Traditions of Genesis,” *OTE* 26 (2013): 840–863, 842–843.

<sup>66</sup> According to P, Lot is the nephew of Abraham. In the older tradition he was perhaps Abraham’s brother, but it is also possible that the word is used rhetorically in 13:8.

<sup>67</sup> De Pury, *art. cit.* (2009), 232.

<sup>68</sup> For references regarding a military conflict between Ammon and Judah, see Ulrich Hübner, *Die Ammoniter: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Religion eines transjordanischen Volkes im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr* (ADPV 16; Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1992), 285f. For Moab see Stefan Timm, *Moab zwischen den Mächten: Studien zu historischen Denkmälern und Texten* (ÄAT 17; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1989), 171–180; Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona-Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 140–146; Erasmus Gass, *Die Moabiter, Geschichte und Kultur eines ostjordanischen Volkes im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr* (ADPV 38; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 138–210.

In contrast to these texts, and especially contrary to Deuteronomy 23:4 (“No Ammonite or Moabite is allowed in the assembly of Yhwh, never is one of their offspring allowed in the assembly of Yhwh, even not in the tenth generation”), a nonviolent vision towards Moab and Ammon appears in Deuteronomy 2:

v. 9: There Yhwh spoke to me: Do not attack the Moabites and do not get yourself into a war with them! I will not give you anything of this land as property; because I gave Ar<sup>69</sup> to the sons of Lot as property.

v. 19: You will come close to the Ammonites; do not attack them, and do not get yourself into a war with them! I will not give you anything of the land of the Ammonites as property, because I gave it to the sons of Lot as property.

These texts, which belong to a post-dtr edition of the Book of Deuteronomy,<sup>70</sup> depend on Genesis 13 (and 19:30ff) and understand the Moabite and Ammonite territories as a gift by Yhwh to these peoples, displaying a universalistic tendency that does not yet exist in Genesis 13\*.

It is difficult to detect the exact historical and political context of Genesis 13\*. According to Naʾaman, Genesis 13 already implies an “overall-Israelite” understanding of Abraham, because Ammon and Moab had been neighbors of Israel at the time of the monarchy.<sup>71</sup> Jericke argues that Ammon and Moab were neighbors of Judah only after the conquest of Judah by the Babylonians.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, 586 BCE should be the *terminus post quem* for the dating of Genesis 13\* and 18–19\*. The question is, however, whether such a story could emerge only in “post-exilic” times, when the political entity of Ammon and Moab fell apart.<sup>73</sup> If Abraham was not an “official” patriarch of the kingdom of Judah, but rather the ances-

<sup>69</sup> For Ar and the different identifications, see Jeremy Smoak, “Ar,” *EBR* 2 (2009): cols 573–574.

<sup>70</sup> Eckart Otto, *Deuteronomium 1–11* (HThK.AT Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 2012), 427–431.

<sup>71</sup> Naʾaman, *art. cit.* (2015), 161–162.

<sup>72</sup> Jericke, *op. cit.*, 232.

<sup>73</sup> Gass, *op. cit.*, 211–212, points rightly to the meager body of source material.

tor of a rural group in the Hebron area, an Iron Age origin of this tradition is very plausible, since this tradition is concerned with the relationship of the Hebronite groups to the eastern-Jordanian (as well as the Negebite) population. The area was well populated in the late Iron Age, to the west and to the south of the Dead Sea,<sup>74</sup> and the population south of Moab had increased as well.<sup>75</sup> Genesis 13\* thus definitely makes sense in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Theoretically, it is possible that this tradition reflects a “rural” resistance against a Jerusalemite expansion under Josiah.

***“Tent” against “house,” “land” against “city”: the hospitality of Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19***

Abraham’s hospitality in Genesis 18 parallels Lot’s behavior in Genesis 19.<sup>76</sup> The parallels with Abraham indicate that Lot is depicted here in a positive light. The main difference is that Genesis 19 has, contrary to Genesis 18, an urban context. Contrary to Abraham, who dwells in a tent, Lot lives in the city gate. Further, it stands out that Lot makes a *מִשְׁתֶּה* (a banquet) for his guests, a term that implies the consumption of alcoholic beverages (see e.g. 1 Sam 25:36 or Isa 5:12). The negative view about the “great city” appears in the description of the evil behavior of the residents of Sodom.

Some scholars assumed that the report about the destruction of Sodom should be understood as a symbolic narrative that hints at the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>77</sup> Such an allegorical understanding would have been possible after 586 BCE, but could hardly be the original intention of the story. The original narrative understood Sodom to be a symbol for a despicable urban culture, but also had, as already mentioned, an etiological interest in explaining the strange landscape surrounding the Dead Sea.

<sup>74</sup> Lipschits, *op. cit.*, 224–237.

<sup>75</sup> Gass, *op. cit.*, 304, points out that after the heyday in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE there is a decline in settlement in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

<sup>76</sup> See also Van Seters, *op. cit.*, 215f.

<sup>77</sup> Jericke, *op. cit.*, 303f. Na’aman, *art. cit.* (2015), 167f, is more careful.

### ***Abraham's three visitors***

Nadav Na'aman, taking up observations by Esther J. Hamori,<sup>78</sup> understands Genesis 18:1–15 as a parallel to 32:23–33, so that both texts could have been written by the same (exilic) author.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, Genesis 18 and 32 display several parallels (a “direct theophany,” with Yhwh appearing in human form), but there are also many differences in style and intention. Hence, Genesis 18 is concerned with the promise of a son and a divine triad, which has no equivalent in Genesis 32, the latter focusing on the change of Jacob's name to Israel.

The switch from singular to plural in Genesis 18:1–15 was often explained by the distinction of two layers. John Van Seters assumes an original history of the promise of a son in which only one divine figure (Yhwh) appeared (1a; 10–15), and which was later complemented by verses 1b–9\*, which mention three divine visitors.<sup>80</sup> However, the reason for the promise of the son, which is given in return for Abraham's hospitality, would then be lost. The tension between “one” and “three” may be explained by the use of a mythological motive very common in the Greek-Roman world. Three deities, who travel incognito, are hosted by an old man or couple, and they return the favor with promising or giving an offspring.<sup>81</sup>

But perhaps there is a more specific reason for the appearance of three visitors and their identification with Yhwh. In some biblical texts, Hebron—also named Kiriath-Arba (“the City of the Four”)—is connected to the number “three”: Numbers 13:22, Joshua 15:13 and Judges 1:10 mention three men from Hebron<sup>82</sup>: Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai. The names of these mythological inhabitants of Hebron, who are designated as descendants of

<sup>78</sup> Esther J. Hamori, ‘When Gods Were Men’: *The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature* (BZAW 384; Berlin – New York: W. de Gruyter, 2008), 5–25, 65–68, 96–101.

<sup>79</sup> Na'aman, *art. cit.* (2015), 165–166.

<sup>80</sup> Van Seters, *op. cit.*, 210–211.

<sup>81</sup> See Thomas Römer, “The Hebrew Bible and Greek Philosophy and Mythology — Some Case Studies,” *Semitica* 57 (2015): 185–203.

<sup>82</sup> Genesis 14:13–14 mentions three allies of Abraham in Hebron.

Anak, are still unexplained.<sup>83</sup> Since the Anakites are described elsewhere as the mythical ancestors of the area around Hebron (Num 13–14), they may be deified ancestors whom the author of Genesis 18:1–25 wanted to identify with Yhwh in order to make them compatible with the Abraham tradition.

### ***The descendant of Abraham and the descendants of Lot***

Genesis 18:1–15 ends with the promise of a son, who must be Isaac. This is more than evident in the allusions to his name through Sarah's laughter. Because the motive of the return of the divine visitor in v. 10 and v. 14 is not resumed, it can be considered that the story originally ended with God's return and Isaac's birth, and that this ending was later replaced by the P narrative in 21:1–7\*. Leftovers of the original story can perhaps be detected in 21:1–7, especially in v. 2 and v. 7.<sup>84</sup> Because the promised son can only be Isaac, it appears that the connection between Abraham and Isaac is probably older than the connection between Abraham and Jacob. Furthermore, the narrative of Genesis 18:1–15 does not seem to know of the existence of Ishmael. Therefore, Ishmael's birth story in Genesis 16 developed either later or in a different context.

Contrary to Abraham, the narrative of the birth of Lot's sons, which explains how he came to be the patriarch of the Moabites and Ammonites, is told in a burlesque manner. After the destruction of Sodom and the transformation of his wife into a pillar of salt, his two daughters get Lot drunk<sup>85</sup> and have sex with him. Lot's offspring is therefore the result of incestuous relations with his daughters. Precisely those daughters, whom Lot had wanted to hand over to the inhabitants of Sodom as sexual objects to protect his guests, take in 19:30–38 the initiative over their father in

<sup>83</sup> Horst Seebass, *Genesis II. Vätergeschichte I (11,27–22,24)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 108, like others, supposes a Hurrian influence.

<sup>84</sup> Köckert, *art. cit.* (2006), 121.

<sup>85</sup> This is maybe an ironical adaption of Lot's "drinking banquet," which he offers to his guests.



order to provide him and themselves an offspring.<sup>86</sup> For the modern reader, the behavior of Lot and his daughters seems scandalous. It is often claimed that the author of Genesis 19:30–38 presents the origin of the Ammonites and the Moabites in a negative light. It should be kept in mind, however, that for an Iron Age audience the situation was much more complex. Genesis 19 deals with the preservation of two essential societal pillars: the practice of hospitality and the absolute necessity to bring offspring into the world. For Lot, his obligation of hospitality is more important than protecting the virginity of his daughters,<sup>87</sup> and his daughters value the necessity of descendants more than the incest taboo. Another possibility for the origin of the story in Genesis 19:30–38 may have been an interest for an etymological explanation for Moab and Ammon, names that can be explained in wordplays like “of the father” (Moab) and “son of my relative” (Ammon). Though Genesis 19 deals with a balance of taboo and transgression, it cannot be ruled out that the story about the behavior of Lot and his daughters also contains elements of irony and even mockery about the origins of the neighbors to the east.

## 2. Historical conclusions

Summing up, the oldest version of the Abraham-Lot narrative in Genesis 13\* and 18–19\*, which can be reconstructed on a literary level, reflects the late monarchic period. Abraham does not appear here as the patriarch of the Kingdom of Judah, but as an autochthon reference figure of several tribes and groups that settle in the area of Hebron. There is a peaceful attitude towards the neighbors to the east, since Abraham acts benevolently towards Lot, accepting his territorial choices. Abraham was already connected to Isaac at that stage. The story about the visit of the three mysterious men, who are identified with Yhwh, may be under-

<sup>86</sup> See e.g. Thomas M. Bolin, “The Role of Exchange in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Its Implication for Reading Genesis 18–19,” *JSOT* 29 (2004): 37–56, 49.

<sup>87</sup> See also Thomas Desmond Alexander, “Lot’s Hospitality: A Clue to His Righteousness,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 289–291.

stood as an integration of non-Yahwistic traditions that were transmitted in Hebron. The narrative about the destruction of Sodom and the birth of Moab and Ammon shows the importance of hospitality and offspring. Furthermore, the dangers of urban life are pointed out, which shows the rural origins of the Abraham traditions.

We agree with Konrad Schmid's conclusion, which posits that the story in Genesis 18 was derived from the *hieros logos* of the holy oak in Mamre, and that this cult place was the *Haftpunkt* of the pre-exilic original traditions regarding Abraham.<sup>88</sup> There was probably a burial tradition of Abraham in the Hebron area, perhaps near the cult place of Mamre,<sup>89</sup> especially if one considers that an ancestor is in many cases remembered by a shrine connected to his grave.<sup>90</sup> The shrine was also related to fertility (see similarly Shiloh in 1 Sam 1–2) as the place where divine promises and the gift of a son to the ancestor were remembered.<sup>91</sup> Such stories about the founder of the place could serve as a proof for the actual presence of the deity in this place. They may well have been preserved and transmitted at the shrine of Mamre during the monarchic period. Far from the eyes and the heart of the Jerusalem elite, this location also helps us understand why Abraham is never mentioned in the early Deuteronomistic (Jerusalemite) texts.

<sup>88</sup> Konrad Schmid, "Genesis and Exodus as Two Formerly Independent Traditions of Origins of Ancient Israel," *Bib.* 93 (2012): 187–208.

<sup>89</sup> Finkelstein and Römer, *art. cit.*, 9.

<sup>90</sup> The identification of the cult and the burial place in Genesis 23:17, 19; 25:9, 49:30; 50:13 is a late priestly invention and occurs only in priestly or even post-priestly texts, probably as part of the debate on the ownership over the land. See Van Seters, *op. cit.*, 293–295; Finkelstein and Römer, *art. cit.*, 9–10.

<sup>91</sup> Na'aman, *art. cit.* (2015), objected to this interpretation: according to the biblical tradition (Josh 14:6–14; 15:13–14; Judg 1:20), Caleb and not Abraham was the eponymous ancestor of Hebron. There are indeed two competing traditions about Hebron: Abraham is totally ignored in the Deuteronomistic literature and Caleb is not mentioned in the patriarchal cycle.

#### IV. Pre-priestly additions in the neo-babylonian period: Abraham's move to Egypt and the birth of Ishmael

As indicated previously, Genesis 12:10–20 and 16\* belong together, and probably have a pre-priestly origin. Indeed, Genesis 17\* (P) presupposes the knowledge of Genesis 16 and 18:1–15, and purports to answer the question of how to distinguish between the two sons of Abraham.

Van Seters<sup>92</sup> pointed in particular to the close stylistic and literary connection between Genesis 12:10–20 and 16:1–2, 4–8, 10–13.<sup>93</sup> Both narratives are constructed in two scenes that are distinguished from each other through a change in location (Gen 12:10–13: moving to Egypt; 12:14–20: in Egypt; 16:1–6: in the house of Abraham; 16:7–13: in the desert). In the beginning, both narratives have a slightly unorthodox suggestion which is introduced each time (12:11; 16:2) by הִנֵּה-נִא (‘‘Behold now’’). In Genesis 12 Abraham talks, Sarah remains silent and obeys. In Genesis 16, Sarah talks and Abraham follows his wife’s proposal. In both narratives, the original proposal provokes complications, which in both cases are defused by an unexpected action of Yhwh or his messenger. Genesis 12:10–20 and 16\* are further connected because Hagar is designated as an Egyptian servant in Genesis 16. This suggests that she belongs to the slaves that were given as a bride price to Abraham by the Pharaoh.

Furthermore, both narratives adapt the Exodus tradition in a ‘‘counter history.’’ In Genesis 12:17 Yhwh strikes (וַיַּכֶּה, cf. Exod 11:1) the Egyptian king as in the plague narrative in the Book of Exodus. But, in Genesis 12, the Pharaoh understands Yhwh’s intervention and sends Abraham (וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתוֹ, cf. Exod 5:1f; 7:2, 14–16, 26f, etc.) back to Canaan. This story polemicalizes discreetly but understandably against the official ‘‘Deuteronomistic’’ Exodus theology. There is a similar theme in the story of Ishmael’s birth

<sup>92</sup> Van Seters, *op. cit.*, 168–170; 192–194.

<sup>93</sup> For this reconstruction of the original story see Knauf, *op. cit.*, 25–35; Thomas Römer, ‘‘Isaac et Ismaël, concurrents ou cohéritiers de la promesse ? Une lecture de Genèse 16,’’ *ETR* 74 (1999): 161–172.

in Genesis 16<sup>\*94</sup>: Hagar, the Egyptian, is here oppressed by her Hebrew mistress (וַתַּעֲבֹדָהּ, cf. Exod 1:11–12; Deut 26:6 and Gen 15:13). And, in the same way as the children of Israel escape (בָּרַח, Exod 14:5) from Egypt, Hagar flees (וַתִּבָּרֶחַ) from her oppressor (Gen 16:6).

These similarities between Genesis 12:10–20 and 16 suggest that both texts were written by the same author, who perhaps wrote them as an addition to the Lot-Abraham tradition. Both stories have a rather “liberal spirit” and seem to criticize the Jerusalemite Exodus theology.

Dating the two texts is difficult. Regarding the ancestress narrative in 12:10–20, Levin recently qualified this text as very late, arguing that Genesis 26:1–11<sup>\*</sup> contains the oldest version of the “endangered ancestress” narrative.<sup>95</sup> However, Levin does not discuss the relationship between 12:10–20 and 16<sup>\*</sup>, and does not provide a clear socio-historical context for the narrative.<sup>96</sup>

The fact that Genesis 12:10–20 was put before Genesis 13 may be understood as a message that Abraham should not live in Egypt but in the land that Yhwh did promise to him.<sup>97</sup> The narrative may then be understood as a polemic against the Egyptian diaspora which, according to Jeremiah 41–42, was founded by self-initiative (see also Abraham’s self-initiative in Gen 12:10). Consequently, Genesis 12:10–20 should be dated to the Babylonian period at the earliest.

This earliest dating might fit Genesis 16<sup>\*</sup>. The best explanation for the name “Ishmael” is still, despite some objections,<sup>98</sup> the

<sup>94</sup> Thomas B. Dozeman, “The Wilderness and Salvation History in the Hagar Story,” *JBL* 117 (1998): 23–43.

<sup>95</sup> Christoph Levin, “Abraham in Ägypten (Gen 12,10–20),” in „Vom Leben umfassen“. Ägypten, das Alte Testament und das Gespräch der Religionen. Gedenkschrift Manfred Görg (ed. Stefan Wimmer and Georg Gafus; ÄAT 80; Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2014), 109–121. For the relation between Genesis 12:1–10, Gen 20 and 26:1–11 see our discussion above.

<sup>96</sup> See p. 119, where Levin speaks of an “Abraham-Midrash.”

<sup>97</sup> Blum, *op. cit.* (1984), 311; Jakob Wöhrle, “Abraham und das Leben im Ausland. Zur Intention der Ahnfrau-Erzählung in Genesis 12,10–20 und ihrer frühen inner- und außerbiblischen Rezeption,” *BN* 151 (2011): 23–46.

<sup>98</sup> Like Na’aman, *art. cit.* (2015), 162–163, who refers to Ran Zadok, “On Early Arabians in the Fertile Crescent,” *Tel Aviv* 17 (1990): 223–231, 223–224. His argu-

term Shumu'il, which designates a group of Arab tribes and appears in Neo-Assyrian texts.<sup>99</sup> This would provide a *terminus a quo* in the Neo-Assyrian period. But if Genesis 12:10–20 and 16\* come from the same hand, then both texts should be dated to the Babylonian period. Genesis 16 seems to connect Arab tribes (“Ishmaelites”) with the Judean groups of Hebron by transforming their patriarch into a son of Abraham as well. Abraham was perhaps reclaimed by Arab (and Edomite) groups in Hebron, in which case the author of Genesis 16 wanted to take account of this fact. In any case, he promotes an inclusive theology, as can be seen in the explanation of the name “Ishmael”: “You will name his name Ishmael (יִשְׁמָעֵאל), because Yhwh has listened (שָׁמַע) to your misery” (16:11). The equation יִשְׁמָעֵאל = יְהוָה שָׁמַע shows that the narrator wanted to identify El with Yhwh: Yhwh is not only the god of Abraham and Isaac but also the god of Hagar and Ishmael, even though Arab tribes call their gods differently. The author wanted to legitimize the coexistence of Judean groups and nomadic groups in Hebron, and perhaps even the mutual use of the sanctuary at Mamre.

As such, it appears that the Abraham traditions from the monarchic period were used by the people who remained in the land in their claim for ownership over the land and property, as against the Jerusalem elite who were deported to Babylon (cf. Ezek 33:23–24). The destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Davidic house and of the Jerusalem elite broke Jerusalem’s monopoly over the cult and the national historiography, and opened the way for the renaissance and development of local cult places (Mizpah, Bethel, Gibeon and Hebron), local traditions and local heroes. During this period, the Abraham traditions were also told and transmitted outside of Hebron and became known in

ments were refuted by Ernst Axel Knauf, “Ishmael (Son of Abraham and Hagar). I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament,” *EBR* 13 (2016): cols 352–355.

<sup>99</sup> Knauf, *op. cit.*, 1–10. Today he would not call these tribes a confederation (see *art. cit.* [2016], cols 354–355). The picture of a large-scale Arabian confederacy, as drawn by Knauf in his book on Ishmael, might be expanded by the biblical writer in order to describe all the West-Semitic tribal groups who wandered all over the North Arabian desert regions, as Na’aman, *art. cit.* (2015), 163, claimed.

what was left of the Kingdom of Judah, among the people who remained in the land.

## **V. Conclusion: the pre-priestly Abraham narratives from monarchic to Persian times**

In the pre-priestly Abraham tradition, two stages of formation can be distinguished: Genesis 13\*; 18–19\* and 12:10–20; 16\*. The Abraham-Lot tradition, of which the first literary form should be dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, deals with the relationship between Judean groups, which consider Abraham as their patriarch, and their neighbors on the other side of the Dead Sea. With regards to the land, a peaceful cohabitation is propagated, and a close relationship between the groups that are represented by Abraham and those whose ancestor is Lot is claimed. Abraham is not an official patriarch of Jerusalem or the kingdom of Judah; he is a “rural” ancestor, who resides in Mamre.

The “liberal” and anti-dtr perspective of this pre-priestly Abraham tradition matches the later texts 12:10–20 and 16, added during the exilic period. Ishmael, who represents West-Semitic tribal groups around Hebron that also wandered all over the North Arabian Desert regions,<sup>100</sup> is integrated into the family of Abraham. Abraham’s peaceful attitude and his genealogical relations to Moab, Ammon and the “Ishmaelites” give him an “ecumenical” character, which is later taken up in the priestly texts that develop this idea in their own way.

The combination of the Abraham and Jacob stories does not appear to have occurred before the early Persian period. This link was made by priestly elites at the sanctuaries of Jerusalem and Mount Garizim that collaborated in writing a narrative on the origins of a great Israel, uniting the North and South.<sup>101</sup> One can only hypothesize that families from Hebron brought the Abraham

<sup>100</sup> Nadav Na’aman, “The Boundaries of the Promised Land in the Patriarchal Narratives,” *BN* 170 (2016): 3–12, 6.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Römer, “Cult Centralization and the Publication of the Torah Between Jerusalem and Samaria,” *forthcoming*.

stories to Jerusalem when they left the South under the pressure of semi-nomadic tribes, with the South then becoming part of Idumea. The Abraham narratives were used as the southern answer to the Jacob-Israel cycle. At the same time, however, this new inclusive account of the origins of Israel was also a subtle means for the priestly elites in Jerusalem and Mount Garizim to control and limit the cult sites in the land. It is indeed remarkable that, although several cultic places—such as Mamre or Bethel—are referred to in the patriarchal narrative, once Yhwh has revealed his name and has freed Israel from Egypt, the cult is depicted as centralized and codified for all Israel, even if the central cult place is not identified.<sup>102</sup> For these priestly elites, the integration of southern Abraham narratives in their history of the origins of Israel was also part of a strategy to gain religious control and eventually cultic hegemony over the Yahwistic cults in the southern region. This was important not only because of the presence of Judeans who remained in the province of Idumea, but also *vis à vis* other competing Yahwistic cults that could have gained importance in the South during the exilic period.

In the context of the Enneateuch, the priestly account of Israel's origins became an introduction to a larger national history of Israel with a clear pro-Judean orientation. As such, it could support the claim for the centrality of the Jerusalemite cult. This claim was made by the returning Jerusalemite elite and their descendants as part of the creation of the new post-Davidic history of Israel. With the establishment of the province of Idumaea, the figure of Abraham was used as “proof” of Judean ownership over the South. The Abraham narratives corresponded well to the new geopolitical situation but, at that time, Abraham's status had already turned to that of patriarch of “all Israel,” far from his original position as founder and ancestor of the cultic place of Mamre.

<sup>102</sup> The Pentateuch never states explicitly the identity of the exclusive place where Yhwh should be worshipped, allowing different understandings of “cult centralization.” See Christophe Nihan, “The Torah between Samaria and Judah: Shechem and Gerizim in Deuteronomy and Joshua,” in *The Pentateuch as Torah. New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance* (ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 187–223.

# Differentiation of the *qayin* Family of Roots in Biblical Hebrew

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**Résumé.** En hébreu biblique, les racines qny, qn<sup>3</sup> et qyn sont généralement considérées comme indépendantes et d'origine distincte. Cette étude signale cependant qu'elles recèlent toutes des signifiants dans le domaine de la métallurgie. Plus encore, il apparaît que les autres signifiants de ces trois racines, en dépit de leur grande diversité (création, enfantement, chant, jalousie, commerce, et même roseau) se rattachent eux aussi au domaine de la métallurgie et de son champ culturel au Levant méridional. Ces observations suggèrent l'existence d'un processus de différenciation linguistique des racines qny, qn<sup>3</sup>, et qyn à partir d'un précurseur commun, qayin, désignant à la fois l'acte de production de métal dans un fourneau et le métal issu de cette activité. Les présentes considérations confirment l'importance culturelle de la métallurgie au sud Levant, et mettent aussi en évidence certains processus de différenciation linguistique probablement en œuvre dans les idiomes parlés au Levant méridional au Chalcolithique ou Bronze ancien.

## Introduction

In the Bible, the noun Cain (*qayin*) designates the eponymous progenitor of the tribe of Kenites (*qyny*), which is also considered in Genesis 4 as the Canaanite civilizing hero.<sup>1</sup> This evidence em-

<sup>1</sup> John F.A. Sawyer, "Cain and Hephaestus. Possible Relics of Metalworking Traditions in Genesis 4," *Abr-Nahrain* 24, 1986, p. 155-166; Paula M. McNutt, "In the Shadow of Cain," *Semeia* 87, 1999, p. 45-64, p. 45-49; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Kenite-Midianite Hypothesis Revisited and the Origin of Judah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33, 2008, p. 131-153, p. 140; John Day, "Cain and the Kenites," in *Homeland and Exile – Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Buxenay Oded*, eds. G. Galil, M. Geller and A. Millard, Leiden, Brill, 2009, p. 335-346, p. 342; Joel N. Lohr, "So YHWH established a sign for Cain: Rethinking Gene-



phasizes the cultural importance of metallurgy in the southern Levant. It also suggests that *qayin* may be one of the most ancient metallurgy-related appellations in this region. These considerations prompted us to examine what an analysis of the term *qayin* and its biblical Hebrew cognates may inform us about the cultural dimension of metallurgy, how it was perceived in the southern Levant, and how a new differentiated lexicon evolved in reference to this new reality.

### ***qayin* as metal**

Apart from denoting the forefather of the Kenites, the noun *qayin* is encountered in 2 Sam 21:16, where it is generally understood as designating a *spear*.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation, already evidenced in the Septuagint translation of *qayin* as δόρατος in this verse, is sometimes explained as originating in a root mutation of *qaneh*, a primary noun that denotes a reed.<sup>3</sup> Thus construed, the noun *qayin* is said to reflect the use of reeds as spears in prehistory and has nothing to do with Cain, the Kenites, and metallurgy. English translations that respect the grammatical singularities of the Hebrew text, however, show how problematic this interpretation may be: “*And Ishbibenob, who was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear (qêynô) was three hundred mishqal of brass, he being girded with new armour (hāgûr), thought to have slain David*” (JPS translation). A spear is a long wooden shaft that terminates with a metallic head. Thus, if *qayin* truly denotes a spear, we should deduce from this verse that the bronze head of this instrument weighed 300 shekels (about 3.5 kg). Such a spear is unusable; one even doubts that a warrior could efficiently hold it horizontally in one hand. This simple consideration rules out the interpretation of *qayin* as *spear* in this verse. Translating *qayin* in the alternative way, as *metal*, clarifies the sentence: “*And Ishbibenob, who was of the*

sis 4,15,” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentische Wissenschaft* 121, 2009, p. 101-103, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> BDB: 883; HALOT 3: 1097; DCH 7: 248.

<sup>3</sup> HALOT 3: 1097.

sons of the giant, the weight of the metal on it [= his metal] was three hundred shekel of bronze, and it was a new armor, thought to have slain David.” Here, the enemy is described as wearing a new coat of heavy bronze armor that renders him almost practically invincible. Accordingly, *qayin* designates not only the eponymous ancestor of the Canaanite metalworkers but also the raw material that they produced, treated and shaped.<sup>4</sup>

### Extension to phonetically-related roots

In biblical Hebrew, not only *qayin* but also roots phonetically related to it (such as *qny*, *qnʿ*, and *qyn*) have a metallurgical meaning.

#### *qny as to hammer metal*

The demiurgic activity of YHWH is evoked by *qny* in the liturgical formulation *ʾl ʿlywn qnh šmym wʾrṣ* (Gen 14:19.22).<sup>5</sup> The metallurgical dimension of this *qny* activity is revealed by the traditional representation of heaven and earth in ancient Canaan. The Hebrew term *rāqīʿa* (firmament) is derived from the verb *rqʿ*, which denotes the flattening of a piece of metal by hammering.<sup>6</sup> This usage indicates that the firmament was probably conceived in Canaan as a giant piece of metal that the demiurge hammered at the time of creation.<sup>7</sup> This notion recurs in the Bible, when YHWH is praised for having stretched (*nty*) the heavens (Isa 42:5; 44:24;

<sup>4</sup> As shown later in this paper, a similar occurrence of *qayin* as *metal* is identified in Num 24:22.

<sup>5</sup> This is confirmed by the parallel formula that praises the supreme deity as the maker of heaven and earth in Pss 115:3; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6.

<sup>6</sup> John P. Brown, “Cosmological myths and the Tuna of Gibraltar,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 99, 1968, p. 37-62, p. 37-42; Ellen Van Wolde, “Why the verb *ברא* does not mean create in Genesis 1.1-2.4,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34, 2009, p. 3-23, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> In ancient Egypt, too, the firmament was identified as a giant plate of copper hammered by Ptah, the smith-god. Ernest A.W. Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. 1, London, Methuen, 1904, p. 502, 511.

45:12; 51:13; Job 9:8; Ps 104:2), and by the psalmist, who cries in praise that “*the firmament (rāqī‘a) claims his handiwork*” (Ps 19:2). According to the Bible, the earth was also hammered by YHWH at the time of creation; the sources that demonstrate this (Isa 42:5; 44:24; Pss 78:54; 136:6) reveal that Israelite theology apparently regarded the demiurgic process as a whole as a metallurgical event. Accordingly, the use of *qny* in the liturgical formula of Gen 14:19.22 had probably the connotation of metalworking.

This meaning of *qny* is not restricted to divine creation. Proverb 15:32, for example, is generally understood as encouraging the acquisition (*qny*, as in *to acquire*) of intelligence:

*pôrēa‘ mûsār mō’ēs nap’ešô ; w’ešômēa‘ tôkaḥat qōneh lēb*

This proverb is translated (ESV) as “*Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.*” It stresses a parallel between nouns that are similarly positioned in the two hemiverses, *mûsār* and *tôkaḥat*, both expressing *reprimand* and *chastisement*,<sup>8</sup> *lēb* and *nap’eš* similarly evoking *heart*, *personality*, *intelligence*. This parallelism contrasts with the opposing meanings of the verbs in these two hemiverses: *pôrēa‘* (= *let free from*) versus *w’ešômēa‘* (= *hear and accept*).<sup>9</sup> One would also expect a contrast to occur in the second pair. An opposition between *mō’ēs* as *to reject* and *qōneh* as *to acquire* is theoretically possible but it would render obscure the expression *mō’ēs nap’ešô*, “*rejects his soul*”, especially in the context of chastisements. A simpler contrast emerges from the metallurgical meaning of the verb *m’s* as designating the act of melting.<sup>10</sup> This is because the second hemiverse, evoking the strengthening of the heart (intelligence, wisdom) by experience—even painful experience—fits the meaning of *qny* as hammering a

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Prov 13:24; 22:15; 23:13.

<sup>9</sup> HALOT 4: 1571.

<sup>10</sup> This meaning of *m’s* is revealed in Ps 58:8 and Job 7:5.16. The metallurgical dimension of this verb is revealed in Jer 6:30 through the expression *kesep nīm’ās* evoking silver so unusable that it has to be remelted to purify it. This melting imagery of the heart is used (nif’al) in Jos 2:11; Isa 13:7 and Ezek 21:12. A dual meaning of the couple *qny/m’s* (acquire/reject and strengthen/melt) should obviously not be excluded.

piece of metal in order to harden it. The same metallurgical metaphor recurs in Prov 19:8: “He that forges his heart [*qōneh lēb*] loves his soul” and in Prov 1:5 (*wēnābôn taḥēbūlôt yiqēneh*), in which painful experiences (*taḥēbūlôt*) are imaged as painful metalwork that improves wisdom. These indications confirm that the metallurgical meaning of the root *qny* was well preserved in biblical Hebrew.<sup>11</sup>

### ***qny as to cast metal***

At the beginning of the song in Prov 8:22-31, Lady Wisdom uses the locution *qānānî* to evoke her coming to existence. This word is frequently understood in the context of demiurgic activity and has been translated as *YHWH created me* (*qny* [*qal*] as to create). The next verse (v. 23) elaborates on how Lady Wisdom came into being: *mēʿōlām nīsakēti mērōš*. In Isa 40:19; 44:10, the verb *nsk* denotes the casting of hot metal in a mould. This metallurgical meaning has also been identified in Ugaritic (*nsk* as to cast, to pour out, to melt) and appears to be a very ancient dimension of meaning in Canaanite languages.<sup>12</sup> This metallurgical dimension is reflected in biblical Hebrew by the noun *masēkāh*, which evokes the metallic figurines that were produced by mould casting.<sup>13</sup> It seems, therefore, that the verb *nsk* (*nif*) in Prov 8:23 explains the process

<sup>11</sup> This metallurgical dimension (*qny* as to forge) is also apparently attested in Ugaritic, in the story of Aqhat (1.17 vi 41) when the goddess Anat ‘forged in her heart’ (*wblb tqny*) a plot in order to gain the bow that Koṭar offered to Aqhat. See Baruch Margalit, *The Ugaritic poem of Aqht*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1989, p. 125-126, 187-188; Nick Wyatt, *Religious texts from Ugarit. The world of Ilmilkū and his Colleagues*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, p. 276-277. See also HALOT 3: 1111.

<sup>12</sup> HALOT 2: 703; Christoph Dohmen, “nsk” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. 9), eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1998, p. 455-461, p. 456.

<sup>13</sup> Christoph Dohmen, “Masēkā,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. 8), eds. by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1997, p. 431-437, p. 431.

that brought Lady Wisdom into being: casting metal in a mould.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, *qny* in Prov 8:22 probably denotes a metallurgical process closely related to the casting of Lady Wisdom as the earliest stage in the morphogenesis of the created Universe.<sup>15</sup>

### **qn' as to re-melt**

The nexus of *qn'* and metallurgy is revealed through the simile of rust (in nominal and verbal forms) in Sirach: "*Never trust an enemy; his wickedness is as destructive as rust (qn'h). Watch out, and be on guard against him, even if he acts ever so humble. He is like a metal mirror that rusts away (qn') if you don't keep it polished.*" (Sir 12:10-11).<sup>16</sup> This metallurgical meaning recurs in Arabic and is considered part of the pan-Semitic metallurgical vocabulary.<sup>17</sup> This conclusion is confirmed by the meaning of the verb *qn'* (*qal*). This stem, encountered in the Bible exclusively in a divine context, is associated with humans in the Bible only in the adjective *qin'āh* and unambiguously expresses jealousy and closely-related feelings in this context of use. The verb *qn'* (in the divine context) refers not to a feeling closely related to jealousy but to a specific mode of action involving a devouring fire that is likened to a volcanic eruption (e.g. Deut 32:21-22; Zeph 1:18; 3:8; Nah 1:2-5). The metallurgical dimension of this fire is stressed not only by the symbolic homology between volcanoes and furnaces but also by associations,

<sup>14</sup> It should be translated, therefore, as "*From the everlasting I was cast from head*". A wordplay is promoted here between the two meanings of *mērōš* *from the beginning* and *from the head*, the first evoking the ancientness of Lady Wisdom and the second evoking the casting of a statuette through an orifice located on its upper part.

<sup>15</sup> Concerning the parallel between *qny* and *nsk*, see Alan Lenzi, "Proverbs 8: 22-31: Three perspectives on its composition," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, 2006, p. 687-714.

<sup>16</sup> Good News translation. Concerning this meaning of *qn'* in Hebrew, see Godfrey R. Driver, "Hebrew Notes on the 'Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach'," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 53, 1934, p. 273-290, p. 276; DCH 7: 266, 602.

<sup>17</sup> Driver "Hebrew Notes," p. 276. This conclusion is confirmed by the designation of lapis-lazuli, a blue-green stone (of coloration similar to that of copper rust), as *uqnu* in Akkadian.

in the Bible, of the *qn'* mode of action with metallurgy.<sup>18</sup> As evidence of this, the divine *qn'* destroying process spontaneously yields a new and improved reality (e.g. Zeph 3:8-9; Isa 37:22-32; Zech 7:6, 8-11), a feature that corresponds to the recycling of corroded metal in antiquity by remelting it in a furnace. This recycling process occurs without any loss of matter and, for this reason, was treated as a genuine wonder and a holy source of vitalization, healing, and rejuvenation.<sup>19</sup> It is likely that the reference to *qn'* as an essential attribute of YHWH (Ex 34:14) and even as his holiness (Jos 24:19) refers not to any violent expression of jealousy but to the power of rejuvenation that inheres to such a fiery destruction of shape.<sup>20</sup>

### **qyn as to smelt**

The root *qyn*, in biblical Hebrew, establishes a close relationship with metalworking by designating members of the Canaanite corporation of metalworkers as *qyny*.<sup>21</sup> According to the parallel that exists between the name of the Kenite clans and some names identified in the genealogy of Edom and Seir (Genesis 36), scholars deduced that the Kenites originated in the southeastern Le-

<sup>18</sup> Nissim Amzallag, "Furnace Re-melting as Expression of YHWH's Holiness: Evidence from the Meaning of *qanna* (קנא) in Divine Context," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134, 2015, p. 233-252.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> The noun *qin'āh*, clearly expressing *jealousy* in a human context, is also reported as a characteristic of YHWH. In this latter context, however, *qin'āh* has a more ambivalent meaning that combines anger, fire, destruction, and further re-emergence of a new, improved reality. These actions evoke the process of metal recycling through furnace re-melting, expressed through the verb *qn'* (*qal*). See Amzallag, "Furnace Re-melting".

<sup>21</sup> Paula M. McNutt, *The Forging of Israel. Iron Technology, Symbolism and Tradition in Ancient Society*, Sheffield, Almond Press, 1990, p. 239-243; Blenkinsopp, "The Kenite-Midianite Hypothesis," p. 140; Day "Cain and the Kenites," p. 337; Mondriaan "Who were the Kenites?," p. 416-417. Bob Becking ("Cain", in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, eds. by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst, Leiden, Brill, 1999, p. 180) deduces that "In view of the etymology of the name, Qayin may well have been a patron deity for the metal-workers."

vant and, more specifically, the copper-producing area in the Arabah.<sup>22</sup> This point is confirmed in Num 24:21 by the explicit mention of *Sela'*, the high place upland from the metallurgical area of Punon, as the homeland of the Kenites and the site of their activity.<sup>23</sup> It follows that the Kenites were first identified as metal producers (smelter operators) and only later as metalworkers. This conclusion corresponds to their nomadic way of life, well attested in the metallurgical areas of the southern Levant<sup>24</sup> and adapted to their desert environmental conditions, rather than the sedentary way of life of city and palace metalworkers. It is therefore likely that the root *qyn*, through the specific appellation of the Kenites, expresses preferentially the act of smelting (producing copper from ore) over metalworking (producing metal artifacts).

These considerations reveal that the three phonetically related roots, *qny*, *qn'* and *qyn*, basically (*qal* stem) express complementary metallurgical realities. This suggests the possibility of an etymological relationship among these roots. They may be gathered within a pool defined here as the *qayin* family of roots.

<sup>22</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, "The tradition of Moses and Jethro on the Mountain of God," *Tarbiz* 56, 1988, p. 449–460; McNutt, *The forging of Israel*, p. 191–192; Blenkinsopp "The Kenite-Midianite Hypothesis," p. 138, 149; Mondriaan "Who were the Kenites?," p. 423.

<sup>23</sup> On the location of Sela in Num 24:21, see Zecharia Kallai, "The Southern Border of the Land of Israel: Pattern and Application," *Vetus Testamentum* 37, 1987, p. 438–445, p. 442. Fawzi Zayadine ("Le relief néo-Babylonien à Sela' près de Tafileh – Interprétation historique," *Syria* 76, 1999, p. 83–90, p. 83–84) identifies it with the high place of the Edomites mentioned in 2 Kgs. 14:7. Mondriaan ("Who were the Kenites?," p. 421) concluded that the rock evoked in Balaam's oracle "...appears to be a reference to the mountains of Edom and Midian, and could denote the Edomite mountain fortress Sela, close to rich copper deposits."

<sup>24</sup> Tom E. Levy, "Pastoral Nomads and Iron Age Metal Production in Ancient Edom," in *Nomads, Tribes and the State in the Ancient Near East – Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Jeffrey Szuchman, Chicago, The Oriental Institute, 2009, p. 147–177.

## Extending the metallurgical meaning

The roots *qny*, *qyn*, and *qnʾ* in biblical Hebrew have meanings other than metallurgical. Having identified metallurgy as a common meaning, however, we should now ask whether the other denotations of these roots may also be interpreted as extensions of the semantic field that circumscribes the *qayin* family.

### *qny as to buy/purchase*

It is generally assumed that *to buy* (= *to acquire by monetary payment*) represents the fundamental meaning of the root *qny*<sup>25</sup>, from which *to acquire* (e.g. Prov 18:15; 23:23) and *to redeem* (e.g. Isa 11:11) are derived. This conclusion seems confirmed by the existence of derived nominal forms such as *qinyan* as *personal property* (Gen 31:18; Lev 22:11; Josh 14:4; Ps 104:24) and even the mention of livestock as *miqneh* (e.g. Gen 47:17-18; Ex 9:3.19; Job 1:3), which apparently defines it first of all as a *possession*.<sup>26</sup>

In Antiquity, metals were the privileged mode of payment in commercial transactions. In the ancient Near East, this role of metals in trade is already evidenced in the fourth millennium BCE, with copper central in it.<sup>27</sup> It even seems to be consubstantial of the development, in the Bronze Age, of trade relations between distant regions.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Edward Lipinski, "Qānâ," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. 13), eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004, p. 59-65, p. 59.

<sup>26</sup> This opinion is supported by the closely related meanings of *qny* in other Semitic languages (Aramaic, Ethiopian, Arabic).

<sup>27</sup> Shereen Ratnagar, "The Bronze Age: Unique Instance of a Pre-Industrial World System?" *Current Anthropology* 42, 2001, p. 351-379, p. 355.

<sup>28</sup> Evgenil N. Chernykh, *Ancient metallurgy in the USSR. The Early Metal Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 304; André G. Frank, "Bronze Age World System Cycles," *Current Anthropology* 34, 1993, p. 383-405, p. 391. Kristian Kristiansen ("The Decline of the Neolithic and the Rise of Bronze Age Society," in *The Oxford Handbook of Neolithic Europe*, eds. Chris Fowler, Jan Harding and Daniela Hofmann, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 1-19, p. 7) stresses that "All Bronze Age communities were dependent on metal for their social identity, war-



This essential function of metals is also evidenced in the Bible, which invokes the accumulation of silver and gold as common imagery for richness and wealth.<sup>29</sup> Even when mentioned alone, the noun *ksp* (silver) suffices unambiguously to evoke *trade*.<sup>30</sup> The link between metals and trade is confirmed by the expression *mqnt ksp* as an explicit reference to a *commercial transaction*.<sup>31</sup> The metal-trade nexus is also reflected in the term *qāneh*, in Isa 46:6, to denote the scale on which the metal used for payment was weighed. These observations stress how essential metals were for trading in the southern Levant. This is why *qny*, as *to buy*, may be related to the metallurgical sphere of meanings of the *qayin* family of roots. It should even be considered an extension of the *qayin* designation of metal as a raw material.

### ***qny as to beget***

The meaning of *qny* (qal) as *to beget* is identified in the Bible in the expression “*I have given birth (qānîti) to a man with YHWH*” (Gen 4:1). Also in Deut 32:6, the association of fatherhood with the verb *qny* (*hālô’ hû’ ’ābîkâ qānekâ*) promotes the interpretation of the latter in the sense of procreation. This meaning is confirmed by the designation of Aṭirat at Ugarit as *qnyt ’lm*, ‘the bearer of the gods’.<sup>32</sup> In the Bible, the metallurgical dimension of the *qny* denotation of procreation is revealed by the evidence that the *first* event of procreation (*qānîti* in Gen 4:1) is intimately attached to the name (*qayin*) that evokes metal and metalworking. It is con-

*rior weaponry, and basic subsistence economy from the Middle Bronze Age onwards. Across Europe and into Asia, copper and tin had to be provided on a regular basis from mines hundreds or even thousands of kilometers away. This international flow must then have been connected with reciprocal flows of exports...*”

<sup>29</sup> E.g. Num 24:3; Deut 8:13; 17:17; 1 Kgs 20:3.5; Isa 2:7.

<sup>30</sup> Gen 31:15; 42:35.37; Ex 21:21; Lev 25:37; Num 3:49; Deut 2:6. This is even true for mentions of fragments of silver (*beša’ kesep*) (Judg 5:19) or even the mention of ‘the fragment’ (*habāša’*) as money (e.g. 1 Sam 8:3).

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Gen 17:12.23.27; Ex 12:44.

<sup>32</sup> Cyrus H. Gordon (*Ugaritic Textbook*, Roma, Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1965, p. 479) translates *qnyt ’lm* as the *creatress of the gods*. However, her feminine nature suggests a concept of procreation in this expression.

firmed by the metallurgical imagery in the poem that recounts the creation of Lady Wisdom (Prov 8:22-31), likening her conception (v. 22) to a casting process (v. 23). In Ps 139:13, too, procreation (metonymically evoked through kidney formation) is mentioned through *qny* in the first hemiverse and identified as a casting event (*swk* or *nsk*) in the second one. The metallurgical dimension to which these sources allude integrates well into other concepts about procreation in the Ancient Near East. Assyrian and Egyptian literary sources suggest that the embryo formation was conceived of as a casting process through the lost-wax technique, in which womb and semen played the role of mould and molten metal, respectively.<sup>33</sup> All these considerations allow us again to fit *qny*, as to *beget*, into the metallurgical context of the *qayin* family of roots.

### ***qny as to create***

Scholars have identified *to create* as a secondary meaning of the root *qny*.<sup>34</sup> This opinion is supported by the identification of this meaning of *qny* in Ugaritic, Phoenician, and neo-Punic.<sup>35</sup> This demiurgic sense of the root is probably a secondary extension of many metallurgical activities, such as smelting, casting and hammering. This association is reflected in the Canaanite cosmogony, in which the creator is involved in casting gods (e.g. La-

<sup>33</sup> Daniel Arnaud, "Le fœtus et les dieux au Proche-Orient sémitique ancien," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 213, 1996, p. 123-142, p. 134.

<sup>34</sup> BDB: 888-889; Nancy E. Heidebrecht, *A Lexicon of Metal Terminology in the Hebrew Scriptures with Special Reference to the Excavations of the Metal Industry at Tel Dan, Israel*. PhD Dissertation, Los Angeles, University of California, 1993, p. 503. For I. Cornelius and C. Van Leeuwen ("קנה," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* [vol. 3], ed. by William A. Van Gemeren, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997, p. 940-942, p. 941), "The root *qnh* in the sense 'create' is much disputed but it is to be maintained on grounds of comparative linguistic and religious evidence and of its use and parallels in context." Contra: scholars (e.g. Lipinski, "Qānā", p. 59, 62) consider this interpretation none other than an anachronistic monotheistic reading of the biblical sources.

<sup>35</sup> The expression ʾl qn ʾrṣ is encountered in a Phoenician and neo-Punic inscription (KAI 26 A.III.18 and KAI 129.1 respectively). See also HALOT 3: 1111.

dy Wisdom in Prov 8:22), hammering the firmament, and pounding the surface of the earth as though they were pieces of metal.

### **qn' as jealousy**

The mostly widely acknowledged meaning of *qn'* in biblical Hebrew is the eruption of an intense and self-destructive emotion such as envy, jealousy, anger, love passion, or zeal.<sup>36</sup> The *pi'el* form of the root means *to be jealous* (Gen 36:14; 37:11) and *to be zealous* (2 Sam 21:2); the *hiph'il* form the provoking of jealousy (Ps 78:58).<sup>37</sup> However, no simple etymology for *qn'* as *jealousy* has been proposed, and it is noticeable that the verb *qn'* never expresses jealousy in the *qal* stem, which is reserved for the metallurgical meaning. Accordingly, *jealousy* should be considered a psychological extension of a material phenomenon closely related to the corrosion that gradually destroys metallic artifacts, and/or to the destruction of shape inherent to their re-melting in the furnace.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup>H.A. Brongers, "Der Eifer des Herrn Zebaoth," *Vetus Testamentum* 13, 1963, p. 269-284, p. 269-270.

<sup>37</sup>See for example HALOT 3: 1110-1111; DCH 7: 264-266; H.G.L. Peels, "קנה" in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 3; ed. William A. Van Gemeren, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997, p. 937-940.

<sup>38</sup>Driver, "Hebrew Notes", p. 276. John H. Elliott ("God – Zealous or Jealous but Never Envious: the Theological Consequences of the Linguistic and Social distinctions," in *The Social Sciences and Biblical Translation*, ed. by Dietmar Neufeld, Atlanta, SBL Press, 2008, p. 79-96, p. 85) suggested that "...the root meaning of *qanna* is 'to become red in the face'. Redness in the face is the external symptom of excitement and intense feelings of various things". It seems, however, that the metallurgical interpretation of *qn'* fits better the phenomenon called 'bronze disease', the cuprous chloride corrosion that spontaneously appears on metallic artifacts and gradually destroys them. See David A. Scott, "Bronze Disease: A Review of Some Chemical Problems and the Role of Relative Humidity," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 29, 1990, p. 193-206; A. Krätschmer, I. Odnevall Wallinder, and C. Leygraf, "The Evolution of Outdoor Copper Patina," *Corrosion Science* 44, 2002, p. 425-450. This interpretation fits the description of *qn'*, in Prov 14:30, as something likened to 'rotteness of bones'.

### **qyn as to sing**

The root *qyn* evokes the action of singing in biblical Hebrew as well as in Arabic, Aramaic, and Ethiopic.<sup>39</sup> In the Bible, however, it is generally associated with a specific genre: the singing of laments (*qyn/qnn* as to lament, and *qinah* as a dirge).<sup>40</sup> The close relation between musical activity and metallurgy is insinuated in Genesis by the integration of Jubal, the ‘father’ of the Canaanite musicians (Gen 4:21), into the genealogy of Cain, the forefather of metalworkers. The nexus of metallurgy and music is also emphasized by the half-brotherhood of Jubal and Tubal-Cain, the “*forger of all instruments of copper and iron*” (Gen 4:22).<sup>41</sup> Na‘ama, sister of Tubal-Cain, also has a name that carries a musical connotation (*n‘m* as to sing nicely)<sup>42</sup>, a feature confirming that music and metallurgy were considered twined activities in the southern Levant.

This essential relation is also supported by the representation, in an Egyptian tomb-painting from Beni-Hassan (early second millennium BCE), of a group of Canaanite-like people who visit Egypt with their lyres and their bellows and tuyères.<sup>43</sup> The same association of music and metallurgy recurs at Ugarit. For example, the text RS 24.252 (v. 4) refers to musicians and singers as companions of *Koṭar* (*b ḥbr kṭr ṭbm*), the smith god.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, at Ugarit, Byblos, and Cyprus, *Koṭar* is frequently paired, and even

<sup>39</sup> G. Fleischer, “Qînâ”, in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 13, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004, p. 17-23, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> Sometimes both the verbal and the nominal forms are encountered in the same verse. See Ezek 27:32a: “*In their wailing they raise a lamentation for you, and lament over you.*” See also 2 Chr 35:25: “*Jeremiah uttered a lament for Josiah; and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these a rule in Israel; behold, they are written in the Laments.*”

<sup>41</sup> Day, “Cain and the Kenites,” p. 343.

<sup>42</sup> BDB: 653; DCH 5: 704-705; HALOT 2: 705.

<sup>43</sup> Tomb of Khnumhotep II, a royal servant of Amenemhet II. See Abdel G. Shedid, *Die Felsgräber von Beni Hassan in Mittelägypten*, Mainz am Rhein, von Zabern, 1994, p. 53-65.

<sup>44</sup> Dennis Pardee, *Les textes para-mythologiques de la 24<sup>e</sup> campagne*, Paris: Éditions recherche sur les civilisations, 1998, p. 97-101.

confused, with the lyre god Kinyras.<sup>45</sup> These observations suggest once again that the musical meaning of *qyn* should be derived from the metallurgical meaning of this root.

This overview indicates that all meanings of the roots *qyn*, *qny*, and *qn'* in biblical Hebrew belong to the metallurgical sphere or may be regarded as closely related to it. This finding strengthens the assumption of the existence of a *qayin* family of roots organized around a metallurgical reality, from which derived meanings differentiate gradually.

### Further developments of the *qayin* root family

A metallurgical meaning exists in some words phonetically related to *qayin*, but apparently unrelated to one of the three roots considered above.

#### ***qāneh as a reed***

The noun *qāneh* in biblical Hebrew denotes a reed.<sup>46</sup> The etymology of this nominative, which recurs in Ugaritic and Akkadian, remains so obscure that it is generally treated as a 'primary noun'.<sup>47</sup> Here again, however, it may be related to metallurgy. The possibil-

<sup>45</sup> See John P. Brown, "Kothar, Konyras and Kytheraia," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 10, 1965, p. 197-219; John C. Franklin, *Kinyras - The Divine Lyre* (Hellenic Studies Series 70; Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2016, also available at: [http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS\\_FranklinJ.Kinyras.2016](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS_FranklinJ.Kinyras.2016)), esp. chapters 18-19. The linkage of metallurgy and music, already acknowledged as existing in the Bronze Age, remained visible recently in traditional societies from the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula. William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1956, p. 98; McNutt, "In the Shadow of Cain," p. 49.

<sup>46</sup> A. Lamberty-Zielinski, "Qāneh," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. 13), eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004, p. 65-72, p. 65. In Hebrew, the meaning of *qāneh* extends to the designation of hollow and tubular structures, notwithstanding their origin and the material constituting them.

<sup>47</sup> HALOT 3: 1113.

ity is revealed by an Egyptian drawing from Saqqara that dates from the sixth dynasty (2400 BCE), representing six men using a reed cane to blow air with which they fan a fire that heats a crucible next to two men who cast molten metal into moulds.<sup>48</sup> This representation shows that reeds were used to mouth-blast air on-to small fires such as those used to purify, alloy, and cast metals. Due to their small diameter, reeds cannot deliver the larger volumes of air that are needed to operate a furnace. Even in this case, however, reeds were used, together with clay, in fabricating air conduits (*tuyères*).<sup>49</sup>

Air has to be blown onto the fire in order to raise the temperature to the melting point of metals and silicates. This is why air blasting is the most fundamental, if not the quintessential, activity in metalworking. Here again, this encourages us to attribute the noun *qāneh*, a reed, to the *qayin* family of roots.

### ***maqneh as metallurgical hearth***

The term *maqneh*, encountered in the expression *sēmel haqīn'āh hamaq'neh* (Ezek 8:3), is not considered a genuine lexeme in dictionaries.<sup>50</sup> Most modern scholars deny the existence of *maq'neh* in biblical Hebrew by interpreting it as a variant derivation of the

<sup>48</sup> See Nissim Amzallag, "A Return to the Dark Ages? Reply to Thornton et al. 2010," *American Journal of Archaeology* 114, 2010, p. 317-329, Fig. 1.

<sup>49</sup> An examination of the *tuyères* in use at Timna (southern Arabah) in the second millennium BCE reveals that the air conduit was a clay tube elaborated around a wooden rod of a constant diameter (an airhole of about 2 cm). This tube was thereafter wrapped in one or two concentric cylinders of reeds, densely arranged and tied transversally at intervals to form a cylinder, which was covered by a layer of clay. See Beno Rothenberg, "Copper Smelting Furnaces, Tuyeres, Slags, Ingot-Moulds and Ingots in the Arabah: The Archaeological Data," in *The Ancient Metallurgy of Copper*, ed. by Beno Rothenberg, London, Institute for Archaeometallurgical Studies, 1990, p. 1-74, p. 36-37 and fig. 59; Ella Werker, "Plant Fragments in a 'small tuyere'", in *The Ancient Metallurgy of Copper*, ed. by Beno Rothenberg, London, Institute for Archaeometallurgical Studies, 1990, p. 74-75.

<sup>50</sup> To confirm this, no entry of *maqneh* may be found in the *BDB*, *HALOT* and *DCH*.

*qn'* root.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, *maq'neh* (as variant form of *maq'ne'*) has been seen as a gloss of *qin'āh*, which is construed as *jealousy*. The expression *sēmel haqin'āh hamaq'neh* became translated as “the image of jealousy (*sēmel haqin'āh*) which provokes jealousy (*hamaq'neh*)” and is interpreted as a representation of the goddess Ashera in the Jerusalem temple that arouses the anger of YHWH.<sup>52</sup> This view is challenged by the LXX translation of *sēmel haqin'āh hamaq'neh* as *the stele of the buyer* (στήλη τοῦ κτωμένου). This translation indicates that *maq'neh* was read and understood by the Septuagints as *mēqanēh* (pi'el of *qny*) and that the context of *jealousy* (deduced from *qin'āh*) is totally overlooked by them. This rejection of such a context of *jealousy* is even confirmed by the total absence of translation, in the Septuagint, of the abbreviated expression *sēmel haqin'āh* in Ezek 8:5.

The approach of the LXX toward *maq'neh* in Ezek 8:3 remains problematic because it supposes the insertion of a variant form of *qn'* in an expression where *qn'* already appears correctly written as *qin'āh*. Furthermore, the vocalization of *maq'neh* does not fit the pi'el form of *qny* or *qn'*; nor does it accommodate the hiph'il form, which is commonly appropriated to evoke something provoking a reality. Furthermore, the construct form *sēmel haqin'āh* in Ezek 8:3.5 invites us to interpret *qin'āh* as an essential attribute of the figuration (*sēmel*) and not as an appreciation of the reaction that it provokes. Scholars have proposed alternative interpretations, all designating the *sēmel* in Ezek. 8:3.5 as the figuration of an idol.<sup>53</sup> These alternatives, however, are far from sure because

<sup>51</sup> Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1979, p. 217.

<sup>52</sup> Keith W. Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974, p. 53; Peter C. Craigie, *Ezekiel*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), p. 57; Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, London, SCM Press, 1970, p. 122-123; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, New York, Doubleday, 1983, p. 168); Susan Ackerman, “A Marzēah in Ezekiel 8: 7-13,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82, 1989, p. 267-281, p. 267. This identification is frequently justified by the use of *semel* in used in 2 Chr. 33:7 to designate the Ashera idol evoked in 2 Kgs 21:7. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, p. 239.

<sup>53</sup> Charles Viroilleaud, “Sur l'idole de la jalousie du temple de Jérusalem (Ezek. 8:3-5),” *Revue d'études sémitiques* 1, 1945, p. 59-63) suggested to transform *semel qin'āh* (the idol of jealousy) into *semel ha'eqne'* (the idol of lapis). Harry Torczyner (“Semel Ha-Qin'ah Ha-Maqneh,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 65, 1946,

Ezek 8:4 specifically evokes the *kbd*-YHWH as staying *there*, i.e., in the vicinity of the *semel*. One can hardly imagine the *kbd*-YHWH, the symbol of holiness *par excellence*, staying peacefully near idols and abominations such as those evoked in Ezek 8:6-16. For this reason, the meaning of the expression *sēmel haqīn'āh hamaq<sup>e</sup>neh* should be reconsidered as something closely related to YHWH and his *kabod*. If so, we need to reexamine the meaning of *maq<sup>e</sup>neh*.

Grammatically, *maq<sup>e</sup>neh* looks like *mas<sup>e</sup>gēr*, *maš<sup>e</sup>ēn* and *ma'āšēr*, three nouns generated by adding a preformative *mem* to the root *sgr*, *š'n*, and *śr*, respectively.<sup>54</sup> This *maq<sup>e</sup>tēl* pattern of noun formation focuses on the agent performing the action or enabling its accomplishment (a living agent, a natural element, or a tool) or on the site where the designated agent acts (= material support of accomplishment of the action). A difference exists, however. The MT vocalizes this word as *maq<sup>e</sup>neh* instead of *maq<sup>e</sup>nēh*. This suggests that it issues not directly from the root *qny*, as expected in the *maq<sup>e</sup>tēl* pattern, but more probably from the noun *qaneh* (reed), from which the preformative *mem* introduces an idea of place or agent. Consequently, it may have three possible meanings: the *marsh* as the place where reeds grow, *metallurgical hearths* (furnaces and fire-pots on which crucibles are heated) as the place where reeds are used as tuyères, or the metalworker who blows through this instrument to fan a fire. The second meaning is especially interesting here because, in a divine context, the verb *qn'* evokes not being jealous but rather the action of re-melting rusted artifacts for the recycling of their metal (see above). Accordingly, the expression *sēmel haqīn'āh hamaq<sup>e</sup>neh* should be translated as *the symbol of furnace re-melting*, abbreviated

p. 293-302, p. 298-300) transformed *qn'* in Ezek 8:3, 5 as *qny* in the meaning of to purchase, so that he understood the expression *sēmel haqīn'āh hamaq<sup>e</sup>neh* as evoking a *symbol of redemption*. The same emendation of *qn'* into *qny* as to beget led Harriet C. Lutzky ("On the Image of Jealousy (Ezekiel VIII 3,5)," *Vetus Testamentum* 46, 1996, p. 121-125, p. 124) to interpret the expression as *the image of the Creatress*.

<sup>54</sup> Emil Kautzsh, *Genesius Hebrew Grammar* (2nd english edition) Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1910, p. 237.



as *sēmel haqīn'āh* (= the symbol of re-melting).<sup>55</sup> This interpretation clarifies the mention in Ezek 8:4 of the *kbd*-YHWH as being present atop this divine symbol. This verse specifies that the vision looks like that experienced in the valley (Ezek 3:23), which is itself likened to the inaugural vision of the celestial universe (Ezekiel 1). Importantly, this celestial universe is depicted in Ezekiel 1 as a celestial furnace (Ezek 1:4.13), upon which is positioned the *kbd*-YHWH (Ezek 1:27-28).<sup>56</sup> This supports the assumption that *maq'neh* originally designated a metallurgical hearth (furnace, fire-pot) as the place where reeds (*qāneh*) were used as tuyères. If so, this is a biblical Hebrew lexeme that belongs to the *qayin* family of roots.

### The origin of the metallurgical denotation of *qayin*

All the words investigated above share the two letters *qn*. These basic letters themselves form a word in biblical Hebrew, *qēn*, a nest. The next question, then, is how closely the nest may also be related to the *qayin* family of roots.

### The nest in Balaam's oracle (Num 24:21-22)

In Num 24:21-22, Balaam pronounces a short oracle on the Kenites: "*Enduring is your dwelling place (môšābekā), and your nest (qīnekā) is set in the rock.*" The parallel between *qēn* and *môšāb* sug-

<sup>55</sup> This symbol may have been the phoenix (see below), the winged disk (probably an abstract representation of the phoenix), or eventually a serpent (uroboros), an animal typically associated with metallurgy in ancient Canaan. See Nissim Amzallag, "The Serpent as a Symbol of Primeval Yahwism," *Semitica* 58, 2016, p. 208-239, p. 226-228.

<sup>56</sup> Concerning the metallurgical interpretation of the celestial throne in Ezekiel 1, see Nissim Amzallag, "Copper Metallurgy: A Hidden Fundament of the Theology of Ancient Israel?" *Scandinavian Journal for the Old Testament* 27, 2013, p. 155-180, p. 164-166. Exactly the same reality is exposed in Ezekiel 10, describing again a divine furnace (vv. 2, 6, 7) upon which *kbd*-YHWH is standing (v. 18).

gests that *nest* here denotes the *dwelling place* of the Kenites. The phonetic proximity of *nest* (*qēn*) and Kenite (*qyny*) is generally treated as a poetic wordplay devoid of etymological significance.<sup>57</sup> Further examination of the oracle, however, suggests a more complex relationship between the nest and the Kenites, especially in the context of their metallurgical activity. The first part of the oracle (v. 21b) expresses an approach that justifies the survival of the Kenites, whereas the second part (v. 22) exposes the conditions of their ruin. The conditions are laconically expressed as *l̥bā'ēr qāyīn*, a phrase generally understood as the *burning/wasting of Cain*. If so, the clause in v. 22a (*kī 'īm yīh'yeh l̥bā'ēr qāyīn*) foretells the Kenites' perdition.<sup>58</sup> However, this interpretation ignores the conditional nature imposed by the locution *kī 'īm*, which introduces what the Kenites are expected to avoid for the assurance of their survival. This feature, expressed as *l̥bā'ēr qāyīn*, remains meaningless as long as *qāyīn* evokes the Kenite tribe through its eponymous ancestor. However, *qāyīn* also denotes metal as a raw material (see above) and the verb *l̥bā'ēr* expresses the blowing on fire. The combination of these meanings suggests that the expression *l̥bā'ēr qāyīn* (literally: *fire-working metal*) is a general reference to the Kenites' metallurgical activities (smelting, purifying, melting, alloying, casting, and hammering). Accordingly, verse 22 should be translated: "If [your nest] will melt metal; Assur will carry you away captive". In this manner, Balaam invites the Kenites to cease their metallurgical activity before the Assyrians recruit/enslave them for their skill (v. 22). As an alternative, he urges them to "set their nest" on Sela', an allusion to the religious high place of Edom (see above), and to restrict their activity to the ritual/cultic dimension of metallurgy. In this interpretive context, the nest should be identified not only as the Kenites' dwelling place but also, and mainly, as the hearth where metal is worked by fire.

<sup>57</sup> Robert North, "The Cain Music," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83, 1964, p. 373-389, p. 378; P. Mommer, "qen," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. 13), eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004, p. 45-47, p. 45.

<sup>58</sup> For example: "Nevertheless, Cain should be burned" [ESV] or "Nevertheless, the Kenite shall be wasted" [KJV].

## The phoenix myth

The myth of the phoenix was widely diffused in Antiquity.<sup>59</sup> A comparative analysis of the various expressions of this myth suggests that it originated in the Ancient Near East and centered on the question of longevity, cyclical death, and rebirth.<sup>60</sup> In its Egyptian version<sup>61</sup>, this myth evokes a bird that builds a nest at lengthy intervals. As it sits on the nest, its body generates enough heat to produce flames that destroy it. The nest, however, is also the place where the bird is reborn from its ashes, and reappears at a juvenile stage (sometimes represented as a larva). This process of rejuvenation by fire strongly suggests that the myth relates the wonder of recycling old (rust) copper through furnace re-melting. Further indications confirm this interpretation: (i) exactly as in furnace re-melting, the phoenix's rejuvenation is closely related to a liquid-phase transition<sup>62</sup>; (ii) heat and intense radiance emanate from the phoenix, exactly as from molten metal<sup>63</sup>; (iii) the colors of the bird, bright red and intense yellow<sup>64</sup>, recall the transition from red to yellow radiance that accompanies the liquefaction of metallic artifacts that are placed in a furnace for recycling; (iv) the phoenix is closely related to the sun<sup>65</sup>,

<sup>59</sup> Elmer G. Suhr, "The Phoenix," *Folklore* 87, 1976, p. 29-37.

<sup>60</sup> Françoise, Lecocq, "Inventing the Phoenix. A Myth in the making through Words and Images," in *Animals in Greek and Roman Religion and Myth*, eds. Patricia A. Johnston, Attilio Mastrocinque and Sophia Papaioannou, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, p. 449-478, p. 450-451.

<sup>61</sup> This myth is acknowledged in ancient Egypt from the Old Kingdom, in which this holy bird was called *Benu*. First mentioned by Hesiod (*Fragmenta Hesiodica*, frag. 304), the myth is later detailed by Herodotus (2.73) and other Greek and Roman authors. See Mary F. McDonald, "Phoenix Redivivus," *Phoenix* 14, 1960, p. 187-206, p. 195-196.

<sup>62</sup> The hieroglyph that evokes the phoenix reveals this with signs that combine rejuvenation/rebirth and 'flooding', i.e., total liquefaction. See McDonald, "Phoenix Redivivus," p. 195.

<sup>63</sup> Suhr, "The Phoenix," p. 29, 33.

<sup>64</sup> Herodotus, 2.73. See John S. Hill, "The Phoenix," *Religion and Literature* 16, 1984, p. 61-66, p. 61.

<sup>65</sup> See McDonald, "Phoenix Redivivus," p. 195; Suhr, "The Phoenix," p. 29. This analogy is confirmed by the belief, reported by Herodotus (2.73), that the

which people in Antiquity conceived as a giant piece of molten metal.<sup>66</sup> These considerations reveal, here again, the existence of a symbolic homology between the nest and the furnace, the place where copper rust rejuvenates.

According to Herodotus (2.73), the Egyptians specified Arabia as the land of origin of the phoenix. The geographical area covered by this appellation includes the Arabah Valley, where the copper of the southern Levant was produced.<sup>67</sup> Other sources claim that the bird also lived in Phoenicia.<sup>68</sup> The antiquity of this myth in the Levant is suggested by apparent mentions of the phoenix in Ugaritic texts under the appellation of *hl*.<sup>69</sup> Such an expression of the myth in the Semitic world is confirmed by the identification of *hwl* as designating the *phoenix* in Job 29:18.<sup>70</sup> The

phoenix periodically visited the temple of the sun-god at Heliopolis to build its nest and overcome regeneration by fire.

<sup>66</sup> Nissim Amzallag, "The Material Nature of the Radiance of YHWH and its Theological Implications," *Scandinavian Journal for the Old Testament* 29, 2015, p. 80-96, p. 86-89.

<sup>67</sup> The exact same Arabian origin is noted by Herodotus for the winged serpent, which has been identified with a serpent species, *Echis coloratus*, that is especially abundant in the Arabah Valley (and identified in the Bible as the Saraph). See Nissim Amzallag, "The origin and evolution of the Saraph symbol," *Antiquo Oriente* 13, 2015, p. 99-126.

<sup>68</sup> Suhr, "The Phoenix," p. 30.

<sup>69</sup> See Mitchell Dahood, "Hôl, Phoenix in Job 29:18 and in Ugaritic," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36, 1974, p. 85-88, p. 86 and references therein; Wilfred G.E. Watson, "Additional Names for Animals in the Ugaritic Texts," *Historiae* 4, 2007, p. 93-116, p. 109.

<sup>70</sup> See HALOT 1, 297; Mitchell Dahood, "Nest and Phoenix in Job 29:18," *Biblica* 48, 1967, p. 542-544 and "Phoenix in Ugaritic," Lester L. Grabbe, *Comparative Philology and the Text of Job. A Study in Methodology*. Missoula, Scholars Press, 1977, p. 98-101; Anthony R. Ceresko, *Job 29:31 in the Light of Northwest Semitic. A Translation and Philological Commentary*, Rome, Biblical Institute Press, 1980, p. 22-26; Scott, B. Noegel, "Wordplay and Translation Technique in the Septuagint of Job," *Aula Orientalis* 14, 1995, p. 33-44, p. 41. Contra, e.g. Roloef Van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix according to Classical and Early Christian Traditions*, Leiden, Brill, 1972, p. 59-60; Françoise Lecocq, "Y a-t-il un phénix dans la Bible ? À propos de Job 29:18, de Tertullien, *De resurrectione carnis* 13, et d'Ambroise, *De excessu fratris* 2, 59," *Kentron* 30, 2014, p. 55-82. This interpretation is already suggested by the curious LXX translation of *hwl*, in Job 29:18, as στέλεχος φοίνικος (= trunk of a palm-tree). According to M.R. Niehoff ("The Phoenix in Rabbinic Literature,"

essential components of the myth emanate from this verse: death including nest destruction in 18a (*with my nest* [ʿim qinnî] *I shall die* [ʔegʷāʿ]) and subsequent rejuvenation in 18b (*“And like the phoenix [hōl] I shall multiply my days”*).<sup>71</sup> It is noteworthy that the liquid element, the essential transitory phase of the rejuvenation in the myth, is mentioned in both hemistichs of the subsequent verse as a phase preceding the full rejuvenation expressed in v. 20.<sup>72</sup> Another mention of the phoenix myth is identified in Ps 103:5, a verse evoking YHWH as stimulating the rejuvenation of the just, akin to that of the eagle (*nešer*).<sup>73</sup>

We may therefore conclude that the myth of the phoenix and the nest/furnace homology were well known in Canaan and that the latter apparently originates in an area including the Arabah, the metallurgical area of the southern Levant.

### Etymological considerations

The etymology of *qēn* (nest) is debated. Scholars assume that it is a nominal form derived from the Semitic root *qnn*, denoting the construction of a nest and the act of nesting.<sup>74</sup> Others consider it a

*Harvard Theological Review* 89, 1996, p. 245-265, p. 256), this translation probably referred originally to the mythical bird. Later rejection of this myth stimulated the alternate meaning of φοίνικος as *palm-tree* and the addition of στέλεχος (trunk) to impose this new interpretation. Noegel (“Septuagint of Job,” p. 41) suggested a polysemic use of *hwl* in Job 29:18, designating both in time *sand* (related to the mention of water in the subsequent verse) and the *phoenix* (identified as bird by the parallel mention of nest [*qn*] in v. 18).

<sup>71</sup> Dahood “Nest and Phoenix,” p. 544; McDonald, “Phoenix redivivus,” p. 189; Hill, “The phoenix,” p. 62.

<sup>72</sup> The singular mention of *kʿbodî* at the beginning of Job 29:20, has two meanings: both glory/honor and the radiance that emanates from molten metal. See Nissim Amzallag, “The Material Nature of the Radiance of YHWH and its Theological Implications,” *Scandinavian Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29, 2015, p. 80-96. The choice of this ambivalent term is probably another reference to the myth of the phoenix.

<sup>73</sup> According to Dahood (“Hōl, Phoenix in Job 29:18 and in Ugaritic,” p. 86), this parallel is strengthened by the designation of the phoenix as an eagle in Herodotus II, 73.

<sup>74</sup> BDB: 890.

primary noun, from which *qnn* was generated by sufformative iteration of the second letter.<sup>75</sup> Some indications suggest that neither *qēn* nor *qnn* is the primal appellation of *nest* in proto-Semitic. The first is the abnormal transformation, in biblical Hebrew, of *qēn* into *qīnnî* (= my nest, Job 29:18), *qīnnô* (Hab 2:9), or the plural *qīnnîm* (Gen 6:14). The second is the presence of an *i*-vowel in other Semitic languages (Akkadian *qīnnu*, Aramaic *qīnnā*). These observations suggest that the proto-Semitic nominative *nest* included a *y* letter (*qyn*). The Arabic term for nest, *qaynn*<sup>76</sup>, even suggests that the primary appellation of nest in proto-Semitic may have been *\*qayin*.

The confluence of these etymological considerations with the symbolic nest/furnace homology indicates that the *qayin* appellation of metallurgical activity may be viewed as an extension of the designation of nest as *\*qayin* in proto-Semitic. This hypothesis is supported by the similarities between the nest and the earliest furnaces in activity in the southern Levant, deeply excavated circular holes about 30-40 cm in diameter.<sup>77</sup> As nests, their preparation involved their filling, on the surface, with dry herbs in order to set and rapidly stoke the fire. As nests, furnaces are places where a new reality (a newborn chick/metal) emerges through heating on the basis of an ostensibly unrelated raw material (yolk/ore). If so, *qayin*, as an extension of the meaning of nest, may be the first designation of the *furnace* and of *metal* (copper), the fruit of its activity.

### Differentiation of the *qayin* family of roots

The present considerations allow us to reconstitute the process of differentiation of the *qayin* family of roots, schematized in Figure 1 and detailed as follows.

<sup>75</sup> HALOT 3: 1109.

<sup>76</sup> Mommer, "qen," p. 45.

<sup>77</sup> Rothenberg, "Copper smelting furnaces," p. 4-8, esp. fig. 6.

## **Emergence of the *qayin* family of roots**

The extension of the meaning of \**qayin*-nest to metallurgy, the traces of which may be identified in mythology and ancient literature, should be considered the primal event in differentiation of the *qayin* family. At origin, *qayin* apparently denoted a furnace. By extension, it also designated two of its most closely related meanings, (i) the *smelter*, in the sense of the builder of the furnace and its operating agent, and (ii) the *metal* (primarily copper), the product of its activity. From this earliest stage of differentiation, two branches of the *qayin* family evolved in parallel. The first is derived from the meaning of *qayin* as furnace/smelter/liquid metal, from which differentiates a subfamily of actions/beings with metal in molten state. The second branch developed from *qayin* as solid metal; it expressed a variety of meanings closely related to its use as raw material (ingots). These two subfamilies are considered here separately.

### **The liquid-metal subfamily**

The liquid-metal subfamily emerges from at least four differentiation events evoked below and schematized in Figure 1.

### ***Differentiation of qaneh and maqneh***

The identification of *qayin* as the primary designator of the furnace suggests the differentiation of the noun *qāneh* (reed) through the *a*-monophthongization of *ay*, a process acknowledged in biblical Hebrew.<sup>78</sup> From this designation, which reflects the primary use of reeds as tuyères, the noun *maqneh* apparently derived as designating all types of metallurgical hearths in which reeds were used as tuyères.

<sup>78</sup> Aron Dolgopolsky, *From Proto-Semitic to Hebrew Phonology – Etymological Approach in a Hamito-Semitic Perspective*, Milano, Centro Studi Camito-Semitici, 1999, p. 74-78.

### **qyn and its derivatives**

The differentiation of *qyn* as *to smelt* is possible through the *y-monophthongization* of *ay*, a process also acknowledged in biblical Hebrew.<sup>79</sup> The musical dimension secondarily expressed by the *qyn* root reflects the fact that smelting and singing were regarded as twin activities in the southern Levant.

### **qny and its derivatives**

Three actions involving molten metal are expressed by the root *qny*: (i) *to melt metal*, (ii) *to cast*, and (iii) *to beget*. Theoretically, these activities should be derived from *qayin* as solid metal because casting starts from the melting in a crucible of metal as raw material. Some historical considerations, however, suggest another path of differentiation. In the earliest stages of metal production in the southern Levant (late fifth millennium BCE), copper was manufactured in a two-stage process. First, copper ore was smelted in a furnace. The high viscosity of the slag thus produced, however, obviated an effective separation of the metallic and silicate phases, causing copper to remain trapped in the slag.<sup>80</sup> To extract it, the earliest Levantine smelters crushed the slag and heated the resulting powder in a crucible until the copper melted and separated.<sup>81</sup> Thereafter, crucibles were also used to purify the produced metal from traces of heavy metals (cupellation). Consequently, melting copper in a crucible was identified with the final phases of the smelting process. For this reason, it is likely that *qny*, as designating the melting of metal in a crucible, was derived not from *qayin* as a *furnace* but rather from *qyn* as *to smelt* through

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> In the southern Levant, this process was improved in the early fourth millennium by the addition of fluxes that improved the fluidity of the molten silicates.

<sup>81</sup> The whole process is described by Aaron N. Shugar, *Archaeometallurgical Investigation of the Chalcolithic Site of Abum Matar, Israel: A Re-Assessment of Technology and its Implications for the Ghassulian Culture*. PhD Dissertation; London, University of London, 2000, p. 244-252.



the displacement of the letter *y* (*qyn* > *qny* metathesis). Such a differentiation, already alluded in Canaanite myths of origin,<sup>82</sup> is supported by the existence, in biblical Hebrew, of pairs of roots with closely related meanings and displaying exactly the same displacement of the *y* letter, such as *gyh* (qal: *to burst forth*) versus *ghy* (qal: *to pull out*) or *hyl* (qal: *to tremble*) versus *hly* (qal: *to be sick*).

### **qn' and its derivatives**

The root *qn'* basically designates the process of furnace re-melting; it belongs to the *liquid-metal* subfamily and, more specifically, is derived from the root *qny*, which evokes the act of melting. Two processes stimulating the transformation of the final *yod/he* letter into *aleph* are discussed below.

### **The solid-metal subfamily**

The term *qayin* as *metal* generates two parallel roots, *qny* as *to hammer metal* and *qny* as *to acquire with metal*. They correspond to the two main uses of metal as raw material that do not require its melting: the fabrication of artifacts by cold-hammering, a typical mode of working copper, and the use of unshaped pieces of solid copper for commercial transactions. Both apparently emerged from an *ay* > *e* transformation of the median letter that led to its si-

<sup>82</sup> The semantic affinity identified here between *qyn* and *qny* is already observed in Gen 4:1: "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain (*qāyīn*), saying: I have begotten (*qānīti*) a man with [the help of] YHWH." Modern scholars generally consider this linkage as mere folk etymology (Heidelbrecht, *Metal terminology*, p. 503; HALOT 3: 1097). However, Solomon T.H. Hurwitz (*Root-Determinatives in Semitic Speech. A contribution to Semitic Philology*, New York, AMS Press, 1966 [1913], p. 35) suggests that the *qyn*-*qny* linkage promoted in Gen 4:1 may reflect a genuine processes of differentiation: "If therefore the *y* in *qyn* had been a phonetic obstacle to its etymology from *qnh*, such an etymology would not have been made. It is evident that the author did not consider his etymology to be a phonetic impossibility, especially as he may have had in mind the analogous formation of *dgy* which, though etymologically connected with *dwg* is, nevertheless, closely related to *dgh*."

lencing (a process well evidenced in Canaanite languages<sup>83</sup>), and the compensatory addition of a final *yod-he* letter to the root. These two roots are considered separately in Figure 1 because they reflect unrelated and even antagonistic activities: the transformation of raw metal into finished artifacts prevents its use for commercial transactions. For this reason, these two *qny* roots probably differentiated independently of each other.

The use of metals for trade became the most popular meaning of the family. It is not difficult to understand why: *qny* as *trade* is a meaning that finds abundant uses and extensions outside the small community of metalworkers. This may explain the extensive differentiation of this root relative to all other members of the *qayin* family (see Figure 1). The scale used for weighing the metal exchanged in the transaction became designated as *qāneh*. The original meaning (trade with metals) expanded to include every form of acquisition and ownership of property (including the redemption of slaves). It even extended to possessions generally and to cattle, as the main ostensible determinant of wealth, particularly.

### The *yod (he)/aleph* substitution as final letter

According to Figure 1, the root *qnʾ* emerged from *qny* through a differentiation process. Three possible pathways of such differentiation may be envisaged.

### Spontaneous substitution

An interchangeability of *aleph* and *yod (he)*, as the third letter of a root, is observed in biblical Hebrew,<sup>84</sup> where roots with final *aleph* may have rare *h/y* final variants. Thus, *ḥbʾ* (= *to hide oneself*) is

<sup>83</sup> Dolgopolsky, *From Proto-Semitic*, p. 74-78.

<sup>84</sup> Frank R. Blake, *A resurvey of Hebrew tenses*, Roma, Pontifical Institute, 1951, p. 83-84; David Cohen, *Dictionnaire des racines sémitiques ou attestées dans les langues sémitiques* (fasc. 2), Leuven, Peeters, 1994, p. 80-81.

written as a derivate from the root *ḥby* in Isa 26:20 and Jer 49:10; *mlʾ* (= *to fill with*) is declined as a derivate of *mly* in Ezek 28:16 and Job 8:21; and *ḥṭʾ* (= *to wrong*) appears as a derivate of *ḥṭy* in 2 Kgs 13:6 and Jer 32:35.<sup>85</sup> The contrasting situation (final *aleph* minor variant of the *yod-he* final letter) is also observed. For example, the main form *ḥly* (= *to be sick*) is given as *ḥlʾ* in 2 Chr 16:2, and the main form *pry* (= *to bear fruit*) is rendered as *prʾ* in Hos. 13:15. In some cases, the minor variant cannot be identified due to the infrequency of both forms in the Bible. This is the case, for instance, in the pairs *bṭy/bṭʾ* (= *to speak impetuously*), *dky/dkʾ* (= *to oppress*) and *sly/slʾ* (= *to carry out a commercial transaction*).

The phenomenon of *aleph/he-yod* versatility, together with the expression *sēmel haqīnʾāh hamaqneh* (Ezek. 8:3), led scholars to assume that *qnʾ* and *qny* may have been interchangeable forms of the same root. By extension, they deduced that the idea of ownership expressed in *qny* may have served as basis for the emergence of the *jealousy* meaning of *qnʾ*.<sup>86</sup> This explanation cannot be justified on the basis of Ezek 8:3 because *maqneh* and *qinʾah* are not variant forms that originally expressed the same meaning (see above). Furthermore, these considerations can hardly account for the evolution of a figurative meaning expressed by the *piʿel* stem (*jealousy*) into a concrete meaning expressed by the *qal* stem (*qnʾ* as furnace re-melting).

### Differentiation process

In biblical Hebrew, roots that differ only in their final letter, *aleph* or *yod*, are sometimes closely related in meaning. Two types of semantic relationships are especially attested: *aleph* emphasis and *aleph* antinomy.

<sup>85</sup> Both notations are sometimes identified within the same verse, as in 2 Kgs 13:6.

<sup>86</sup> See E. Reuter, “qnʾ”. in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (vol. 13), eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004, p. 47-58, p. 49; Day, “Cain and the Kenites,” p. 337.

### ***Aleph emphasis***

Final *aleph* may express an emphasis of the meaning of the final *yod* corresponding root. An example is the pair *qrʾ* (= *to call someone*) and *qry* (= *to meet, to encounter*) of roots. Calling being a preliminary action to meeting, *qrʾ* may be regarded as an amplification of the meaning of *qry*. The same phenomenon is evidenced in the root *klʾ* (*qal* = *to close, restrain, imprison*), which again represents an extension of the meaning of *kly* (*qal* = *to stop, to come to an end*). Similarly, the root *plʾ*, expressing the occurrence of an amazing phenomenon, should be regarded as an amplification of the meaning of the root *ply*, expressing the difference between two homolog entities.<sup>87</sup> Also *šbʾ* (= *to fight against*) should be regarded as an emphatic extension of the root *šby* (= *to flow blood*).<sup>88</sup>

### ***Aleph antinomy***

In some instances, roots differing only in their terminal letter, *aleph* or *yod*, express antinomic meanings. This is the case, for example, in *yrʾ* (= *to fear*), which evokes the feeling of someone threatened by an aggression. This meaning is closely related, in a complementary and opposing way, to *yry* (= *to throw, to shoot*), which expresses the aggression itself. The same antinomic relationship exists between *rpʾ* (= *to heal, to become strong*) and *rpy* (= *to wither, to become weak*), and between *nšʾ* (= *to lend out*) and *nšy* (= *to forget*).

These considerations reveal that the substitution of *aleph* for *yod* as the final root letter is not necessarily limited to random variations flowing from phonetic closeness or confusion. It may also reflect a genuine process of semantic differentiation though

<sup>87</sup> Contra: *plh* is sometimes regarded (e.g. HALOT 3: 930) as a variant form of *plʾ*.

<sup>88</sup> This meaning is deduced from the only use of this verb in Num 5:27. See Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Strange Case of the Suspected Sotah (Numbers V 11-31)," *Vetus Testamentum* 34, 1984, p. 11-26, p. 20. This is corroborated by the Syriac *šapī* (*to purge*) and its Akkadian homolog *šapû* (*to soak, flood*) encountered in medical texts.

*aleph* replacement of *yod* (*he*).<sup>89</sup> This *aleph* substitution modifies the meaning of the root by emphasizing/extending it or expressing an antinomic/complementary meaning. The latter case is an excellent fit for the differentiation of *qn'* as *to re-melt* from *qny* as *to cast*: casting is the process of creating a shape by molding liquid metal, whereas furnace re-melting represents the opposite and complementary disappearance of the shape of a metallic artifact through its return to the hearth.

### Possible proximity effects

The designation of rust as *qān'āh*<sup>90</sup> should be approached as an extension of *qn'* as *to remelt*, denoting metal that requires a re-melting process. This evolution is especially interesting because it expands into the domain of the solid-metal subfamily and creates a (secondary) bond between *qān'āh* as *rust* and *qayin* as *solid metal* (see Figure 1). Such a secondary affinity may contribute to the differentiation of the meaning of *qn'* as rust/re-melting.

The pi'el *qn'* is probably a figurative extension of *qn'* (*qal*) as furnace re-melting, likening *jealousy* with an inflammatory disease that gradually leads to self-destruction. It is likely, however, that the proximity of *rust* (*qān'āh*) to *jealousy* (*qīn'āh*) generated a secondary semantic bond between this negative sentiment and the gradual destruction of solid metal from within by oxidation.

<sup>89</sup> The two processes may superimpose in some cases. For example, beyond the ancient semantic differentiation of the roots *rp'*/*rpy*, a more recent *he/aleph* confusion is observed in *rph* variant (2 Sam 21:16.18.20.22) of the appellation of warrior as *rp'* (1 Chr 20:4.6.8). The same dual phenomenon is identifiable in the designation of the army as both *šbh* and *šb'* in Isa 29:7 and in the rare *nsh* variant of the root *ns'* observed in Deut 15:2; 24:10.

<sup>90</sup> Vocalized as *qīn'āh* in DCH 7: 266.

## Discussion

### Historical considerations

In all areas from the Old world where the domestication of metals may be identified (e.g. Anatolia, the Balkans, northern Mesopotamia, and the Iranian plateau), the process started with the exploitation of native copper. At first, this metal was cold-worked by hammering. Later, native copper was melted in crucibles and cast in moulds. The production of copper from ore (metallurgy *sensu stricto*) emerged only after the possibility of melting copper in a crucible was discovered so that crucibles were used to separate native copper from its mineral gangue. Given that the latter is rich in copper salts, the purification of native copper was spontaneously accompanied, under specific conditions, by the reduction of copper salts and their transformation into metal.<sup>91</sup> In all the lands mentioned, furnace smelting (in which charcoal is mixed with ore) became practiced only after copper was already produced in crucible (in which charcoal and fire are outside the reactor) for a long time.<sup>92</sup>

The only exception to this sequence of events in the domestication of metals concerns the southern Levant. Since native cop-

<sup>91</sup> Veronica McGeehan Liritzis, *The Role and Development of Metallurgy in the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age of Greece*, Jonsered, Paul Aströms Forlag, 1996, p. 129-154; James D. Muhly, "Çayönü Tepesi and the Beginnings of Metallurgy in the Ancient World," In *Old World Archaeometallurgy*, eds. Andreas Hauptmann, Ernst Pernicka and Günther A. Wagner, Bochum, Deutschen Bergbau-Museums, 1989, p. 1-11; B. Höppner, M. Bartelheim, M. Huijsmans, R. Krauss, K.P. Martinek, E. Pernicka, and R. Schwab, "Prehistoric Copper Production in the Inn Valley (Austria), and the Earliest Copper in Central Europe," *Archaeometry* 47, 2005, p. 293-315.

<sup>92</sup> Concerning the differences between furnace and crucible smelting, see Ronald F. Tylecote, *The Early History of Metallurgy in Europe*, London, Longman, 1987, p. 106-115. Concerning the replacement of crucible by furnace smelting, see K. Aslihan Yener, *The Domestication of Metals - The Rise of Complex Metal Industries in Anatolia*, Leiden, Brill, 2000, p. 18-30; Nissim Amzallag, "From metallurgy to Bronze Age civilizations: The synthetic theory," *American Journal of Archaeology* 113, 2009, p. 497-519, p. 498-502.

per is absent in this area, the indigenous south Levantine metallurgy emerged *directly*, in the fifth millennium BCE, from the use of furnaces with no intermediate technological stage (copper hammering, casting, or crucible smelting).<sup>93</sup>

In the *qayin* roots family, the initial event is related not to the metal and its working but to the symbolic identification of the furnace with a nest. This means that the primary event of differentiation of the *qayin* family of roots corresponds *specifically* to the development of metallurgy in the southern Levant. This finding indicates that the first stages of differentiation of the *qayin* family of roots occurred in the southern Levant during the fifth millennium BCE and that they reflect local historical processes inherent to the domestication of metals. It also reveals that the people of the southern Levant Ghassulian culture (4500-3700 BCE) spoke a Semitic language endowed with fundamental characteristics preserved in biblical Hebrew.<sup>94</sup>

These observations, together with the absence of any other semantic developments of *qayin* (apart from rare terms relative to the semantic domain of the nest), suggest that the differentiation of the *qayin* family of roots occurred during the three-millennium span between the beginning of metallurgy in the southern Levant (ca. 4300 BCE) and the first evidence of biblical Hebrew.

### The cultural dimension of metallurgy

The identification of the *qayin* family creates an outstanding opportunity to characterize the way furnace metallurgy became integrated into the cultural horizon. For example, it indicates that, at its earliest stage, the production of copper in a furnace was likened to the development of an embryo into a chick in a nest. The persistence of the phoenix myth even reveals that the nest-

<sup>93</sup> John Merkel and Beno Rothenberg, "The Earliest Steps to Copper Metallurgy in the Western Arabah," *Der Anschnitt* 9, 1999, p. 149-165; Amzallag, "From metallurgy," p. 502-504.

<sup>94</sup> The relevancy of biblical Hebrew for this analysis is confirmed by the abundant etymological evidence that links this language with the proto-Semitic tongue. See Dolgopolsky, *From Proto-Semitic*.

furnace homology long outlived the earliest stages of metallurgy. It also indicates that, through the recycling process (*qn'*), the furnace was regarded as a privileged place where matter was rejuvenated, *i.e.* the site of vitalization. This suggests that metallurgy was traditionally associated, in the southern Levant, with processes of healing, rejuvenation, and afterlife. The extension of *qny* from *casting* to *begetting* linked the cultural domain of metallurgy with the phenomenon of procreation. Even the demiurgic dimension of meaning in *qny* should be regarded as derived from the experience of smelting. Indeed, the copper deposit in southern Levant is a blue-green sandstone (malachite, azurite) that has nothing in common (color, physical properties, nature) with the copper yielded by the smelting process.<sup>95</sup> Before the discovery of the principles of modern chemistry, the smelting of copper from this type of ore was probably thought of as the literal creation of matter in the furnace. These observations, flowing from the foregoing considerations about the differentiation of the *qayin* family, are further corroborated by the Canaanite representation of cosmogony as a metallurgical process and by archaeological observations that stress the cultural importance of metallurgy in the southern Levant from its earliest phases of development.<sup>96</sup> The notion of creation seems therefore closely related to the *qayin* family from the earliest stages of its differentiation. Furthermore, the myth of the phoenix, the role of the nest in rejuvenation, and biblical considerations about the divine mode of rejuvenation by the destruction of shape, expressed as *qn'* in the Bible, reveal the existence of another pole of the *qayin* family of roots: rejuvenation, a process both antagonistic and complementary to the concept of creation of matter by smelting. This means that the *qayin*

<sup>95</sup> Amzallag, "From metallurgy," p. 512-513.

<sup>96</sup> This is revealed through changes in rituals and beliefs that accompanied the indigenous development of metallurgy in the Ghassulian/Beer-Sheva culture (ca. 4500-3700 BCE). See Milena Goscic, *Metallurgy, Magic and Social Identities in the Ghassulian Culture of the Southern Levant (ca. 4500-4000 BC)*, PhD Dissertation, Beer Sheva, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2013, p. 281-284; Milena Goscic and Itzhak Gilead, "Casting the Sacred: Chalcolithic Metallurgy and Ritual in Southern Levant," in *Defining the Sacred - Approaches to the Archaeology of Religion in the Near East*, ed. by Nicola Laneri, Oxford, Oxbow, 2015, p. 161-175.



family of roots, in its metallurgical dimension, expresses two of the most essential fundamentals of religious thought.

### Implications for ancient Yahwism

The importance, in biblical Hebrew, of the metallurgical dimension of meaning of the *qayin* family of roots has been underestimated by modern research, leading to the possible misunderstanding of biblical texts. Even more, it obscures the metallurgical fundamentals of ancient Yahwism. For example, interpreting *qn'*, in the divine context, as a self-devouring sentiment instead of furnace re-melting misleadingly transforms the god of Israel into a *jealous deity*.<sup>97</sup> The negative connotation aside, this eclipses the essential involvement of the deity in rejuvenating the universe through the fiery destruction of shape and the influence of such a process on theological and even eschatological developments in the Israelite religion.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, ignorance of the metallurgical meaning of *qny* led to the frequent translation of this verb, in the divine context, as *to buy*, *to purchase*, or *to possess*, all the way from the Septuagint translation to our days.<sup>99</sup> This transforms YHWH

<sup>97</sup> Some authors argue that these meanings cannot easily reflect the use of *qn'* in divine context in the Bible. See Peels, “קנה,” p. 639. Brongers (“Der Eifer,” p. 276) excludes the idea that YHWH may be jealous of other gods or mortals, considering it as no more than a crude and misleading anthropopathism. See also Amzallag, “Furnace Re-melting,” p. 233-236.

<sup>98</sup> Amzallag, “Furnace Re-melting”.

<sup>99</sup> Most of the dictionaries assume that its essential meaning is *to buy*, *to purchase*, further extended to *acquire*, *transfer ownership*, *possess* and *redeem* (= to buy a slave back, such as in Neh 5:8). See BDB: 888; HALOT 3: 1111; DCH 7: 267; Cornelius and Van Leeuwen 1997: 94. For Lipinski (“Qānā,” p. 59): “...the primary usage of the verb *qānā* is concrete and economic, and remains so through the last period of spoken Hebrew.” Alternately, some ancient exegetes have promoted the idea that *qnh*, in divine context, should be understood as *to create*. The similar opinion is defended by modern scholars arguing that *to create* is a secondary meaning of the root *qny* exclusively reserved to the divine context of use, see BDB: 888-889; Heidebrecht, *Metal terminology*, p. 503. For Cornelius and van Leeuwen (“קנה,” p. 95) “The root *qnh* in the sense ‘create’ is much disputed but it is to be maintained on grounds of comparative linguistic and religious evidence and of its use and parallels in

into a secondary deity in the Canaanite pantheon whom the Israelites promoted to the rank of the supreme god. The image of YHWH ‘acquiring’ a people also introduces misleading conceptions into the man–god relationship in ancient Israel. Thus, overlooking the *qayin* family and its metallurgical dimension of meaning yielded misinterpretations of the essential attributes of YHWH and the Israelite theology from late Antiquity to our time.

### The differentiation of semitic roots

The present study invites us to reconsider the current view of Semitic roots as autonomous entities in meaning and origin. It indicates that roots in biblical Hebrew may be gathered into families that differentiated from a common ancestor. Several elements involved in such a process are mentioned here. First, all letters that comprise a Semitic root do not have the same level of versatility. In the *qayin* family, two letters (*q* and *n*) appear to be stable whereas the third is labile in both its nature (*ʔ*, *y* or *h*) and its position in the root (median or terminal). The versatility of the labile letter is probably not limited to the three phonemes (*ʔ*, *y*, *h*) identified here. This is implied by the existence of a name, *qenaz*, that designates in the Bible a clan of metalworkers.<sup>100</sup> It is likely that this proper noun traces to a *qnz* root belonging to the *qayin* family, the meaning of which, in biblical Hebrew, is now lost.

The versatile letter is not randomly altered. Instead, its modifications appear to be associated with specific transformations of meaning. This point is evidenced by the foregoing analysis of the *aleph* substitution of the terminal *yod*, which signals amplification and/or inversion of meaning. These observations suggest that the earliest stages of differentiation of the *qayin* family reflect, first of all, the existence of a proto-grammar that conditions meanings

context.” This opinion is supported by the identification of *qny* as *to create* in Phoenician and neo-Punic (HALOT 3: 1111).

<sup>100</sup>These metal affinities of the Kenizites are revealed by their genealogy affiliating them to Edom and Seir (Gen 36:11.15.42). See Blenkinsopp “The Kenite-Midianite Hypothesis,” p. 142-149. This proper noun is also attested at Ugarit as *qnd* (see Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, p. 479).



# Quels furent les pires d'entre les rois d'Israël et de Juda selon la théologie deutéronomiste ? Une situation méconnue de divergence entre TM et LXX

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**Abstract.** Among the kings of Israel and Judah presented in the Book of Kings, Ahab and Manasseh are the most criticized. Since Manasseh has done things “more wicked than” the Amorites (2 Kgs 21:11), whereas Ahab had merely done evil just “as” the latter people (1 Kgs 21:26), Manasseh is presented as being “worse” than Ahab and thus surpasses, in the theological perspective of the book, all the other leaders of the two kingdoms put together in terms of religious wrongdoing. This, in fact, is the situation in the MT; it is distinctly different in the Antiochan text (LXX<sup>1</sup>): Ahaziah acted in a manner worse than his father Ahab (1 Kgs 22:54 LXX<sup>1</sup>) and Hoshea, the last king of Israel, was worse than all his predecessors (2 Kgs 17:2 LXX<sup>1</sup>). In addition, the indication of a hierarchy between Ahab and Manasseh, noted above, disappears: Manasseh had done evil “as” had the Amorites (2 Kgs 21:11 LXX<sup>1</sup>). While most commentators overlook all or part of these textual problems, several scholars have recently defended the idea that LXX<sup>1</sup> reflects an older text in 1 Kgs 22:54 and/or 2 Kgs 17:2, while the question should be raised for 2 Kgs 21:11. In this article, I examine these verses and conclude that the MT probably represents the oldest state of the text.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Dans la galerie des dirigeants d'Israël présentés par le livre des Rois, Achab semble le plus critiqué, dépassant même Jéroboam I dans l'échelle du mal : « il n'y a eu personne qui se soit vendu en faisant ce qui déplaisait au Seigneur comme Achab » (1 R 21.25).

<sup>1</sup> Cet article est issu d'une communication donnée à Paris dans le cadre des « conférences de la Bible d'Alexandrie ».

Du côté du royaume de Juda, le pendant est Manassé, qui attire sur lui le plus grand nombre de critiques de la part des rédacteurs deutéronomistes<sup>2</sup>. On lit même qu'il a commis le mal « plus que » les Amorites habitant le pays avant les Hébreux (2 R 21.11), alors qu'Achab avait seulement agi « comme » cette population cananéenne (1 R 21.26). Il en résulte que Manassé se voit présenté comme « pire » qu'Achab<sup>3</sup> et surpasse ainsi, dans la perspective théologique du livre, l'ensemble des autres dirigeants des deux royaumes en termes de déviance religieuse.

Telle est du moins la situation dans le texte massorétique, car elle se révèle nettement différente dans le texte antiochien de la Septante (aussi appelé recension lucianique ; LXX<sup>L</sup>). En effet, sans entrer encore dans le détail des variantes que nous examinerons dans la suite, il est affirmé dans la LXX<sup>L</sup> au sujet de deux rois montés sur le trône après Achab qu'ils agissent d'une manière pire que tous leurs prédécesseurs : il s'agit d'Achazia, fils d'Achab (1 R 22.54 LXX<sup>L</sup>), et d'Osée, dernier souverain d'Israël (2 R 17.2 LXX<sup>L</sup>). Par conséquent, alors que l'apogée du mal fut atteint en Israël sous Achab selon le TM, le texte grec, tout en retenant quelque chose de cette logique (cf. 1 R 20.25 LXX<sup>L</sup> || 1 R 21.25 TM), dépeint une gradation en plusieurs étapes menant au pire de tous les souverains, le dernier d'entre eux ; c'est précisément sous son règne que se produit la prise de la capitale, Samarie, par les Assyriens. En outre, l'indice d'une hiérarchie entre Achab et Manassé, relevé plus haut, disparaît : le texte antiochien affirme seulement en 2 R 21.11 que Manassé a fait le mal « comme » les Amorites.

Pour un livre biblique largement dédié à l'évaluation des rois israélites, ces différences dans les comparaisons entre plusieurs d'entre eux (ou avec des Cananéens), et spécialement les « pires » dans la perspective des rédacteurs deutéronomistes, se révèle saisissante. Or la plupart des commentateurs, notamment les plus

<sup>2</sup> Comme l'a bien montré K. A. D. Smelik, *Converting the Past. Studies in Ancient Israelite & Moabite Historiography*, OTS 28, Leiden, Brill, 1992, p. 129-189, spéc. 139-160.

<sup>3</sup> P. S. F. van Keulen, *Manasseh Through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists. The Manasseh Account (2 Kings 21:1-18) and the Final Chapters of the Deuteronomistic History*, OTS 38, Leiden, Brill, 1996, p. 125.

influents, ignorent tout<sup>4</sup> ou partie<sup>5</sup> de ces problèmes textuels, et il en est de même des études les plus détaillées du texte de 2 R 21<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Les commentateurs suivants ne mentionnent aucun de ces problèmes textuels : R. Kittel, *Die Bücher der Könige*, HKAT, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900, p. 181, 272, 295 ; J. Gray, *I & II Kings*, OTL, London, SCM, 1970<sup>2</sup>, p. 458, 641, 708 ; P. Buis, *Le livre des Rois*, Sources Bibliques, Paris, Gabalda, 1997, p. 176, 248-250, 278 ; E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige*. 1. Kön. 17 - 2. Kön. 25, ATD 11.2, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984, p. 265, 391, 439 ; V. Fritz, *1 and 2 Kings*, trad. A. Hagedorn, Continental Commentaries, Minneapolis, Fortress, 2003, p. 227, 347, 388-392 ; M. A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings. A Commentary*, OTL, Louisville 2007, p. 264, 386, 425 ; L. M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, AOTC 9, Nottingham/Downers Grove, Apollos/IVP, 2014, p. 290, 444, 485.

<sup>5</sup> Les commentateurs suivants ne mentionnent ni le fait qu'Achazia a agi de manière « pire que tous ses prédécesseurs » en 1 R 22.54, ni le fait que Manassé a agi de manière « pire que les Amorites » en 2 R 21.11, selon des manuscrits grecs (rappelons cependant que le texte antiochien n'a été identifié dans les livres historiques qu'à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> s.) : I. Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige*, KHCAT, Leipzig/Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1899, p. 126-127, 188-189 ; A. Šanda, *Die Bücher der Könige. Übersetzt und erklärt*, vol. 1, Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament 9, Münster, Aschendorff, 1911, p. 490 ; id., *Die Bücher der Könige. Übersetzt und erklärt*, vol. 2, Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament 9, Münster, Aschendorff, 1912, p. 316 ; J.A. Montgomery et H.S. Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings*, ICC, Edinburg, T & T Clark, 1951, p. 351 ; S. J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, WBC 12, Waco, Word, 1985, p. 275 ; M. Cogan, *II Kings. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 11, New York, Doubleday, 1988, p. 21 [les versets 1 R 22.52-54 sont traités dans le volume dédié à 2 Rois], 268.

<sup>6</sup> J. Trebolle Barrera, *Centena in libros Samuelis et Regum. Variantes textuales y composición literaria en los libros de Samuel y Reyes*, TECC, Instituto de Filología, Madrid, 1989, p. 200-203 (mais il est vrai que cet ouvrage ne traite que d'un choix de variantes) ; E. Eynikel, « The Portrait of Manasseh and the Deuteronomistic History », dans M. Vervenne et J. Lust (éd.), *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic Literature. Festschrift C.H.W. Brekelmans*, BETL 133, Leuven, Peeters, 1997, p. 233-261 ; F. Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifices. Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities*, BZAW 338, Berlin/New York, de Gruyter, 2004, p. 24 (pas de mention dans les notes textuelles) ; A. Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte der Königsbücher. Der hebräische Vorlage der ursprünglichen Septuaginta als älteste Textform der Königsbücher*, OBO 199, Fribourg/Göttingen, Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004, p. 47, 52-58 ; id., « The Septuagint in the Text History of 1-2 Kings », dans B. Halpern et A. Lemaire (éd.), *The Books of Kings. Sources, Composition, Historiographie and Reception*, VTSup 129, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2010, p. 3-17) ; van Keulen, *Manasseh Through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists*, op. cit., p. 59. Par ailleurs, Hobbs, l'un des rares commentateurs à signaler la variante, opte pour le TM sans justification (2 Kings, WBC 13, Waco, Word, 1985, p. 298-299).

Une poignée d'entre eux les examine et adopte le texte massorétique, comme nous le verrons, mais le fait le plus significatif est que plusieurs des meilleurs spécialistes du texte grec des Rois ont récemment défendu l'idée que ce dernier reflète un texte plus ancien en 1 R 22.54 et/ou 2 R 17.2<sup>7</sup>, tandis que la question mérite d'être posée pour 2 R 21.11. Dans ce qui suit, nous nous proposons de revenir sur ce problème en examinant successivement les versets pertinents au sujet d'Achazia, d'Osée et de Manassé.

### 1. Achazia, fils d'Achab (1 R 22.54)

TM	LXX <sup>B</sup> (Vaticanus)	LXX <sup>L</sup> (texte antiochien)
Il servit le Baal et se prosterna devant lui ; et il provoqua la colère du Seigneur, le Dieu d'Israël, comme tout ce qu'avait fait son père (כָּל אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה אָבִיו)	Il servit les Baals et se prosterna devant eux, et il mit en colère le Seigneur, le Dieu d'Israël, comme tout ce qui était advenu avant lui (κατὰ πάντα τὰ γενόμενα ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ)	Il servit les Baals et se prosterna devant eux, et il mit en colère (le Seigneur) <i>plus que tous ceux qui advinrent avant lui</i> (παρὰ πάντας τοὺς γενομένους ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ).

Comme le montre le tableau ci-dessus, qui illustre les principales différences textuelles en 1 R 22.54, le TM situe Achazia au même niveau que son père Achab dans l'échelle de la colère provoquée chez Dieu. Les leçons grecques, elles, ont pour point commun de comparer Achazia non pas avec son seul prédécesseur, mais avec

<sup>7</sup> Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte der Königsbücher*, op. cit., p. 116-117, 119-121, 178 (pour 1 R 22.54 et 2 R 17.2) ; J. Treballe Barrera, « Histoire du texte des livres historiques et histoire de la composition et de la rédaction deutéronomiste avec une publication préliminaire de 4Q481A, "Apocryphe d'Elisée" », dans J. Emerton (éd.), *Congress Volume Paris 1992*, VTSup 61, Leiden/New York/Köln, Brill, p. 337-339 (pour 2 R 17.2) ; A. Piquer Otero, « What Text to Edit? The Oxford Hebrew Bible Edition of 2 Kings 17.1-23 », dans H. Ausloos, B. Lemmelijn, J. Treballe Barrera (éd.), *After Qumran. Old and Modern Editions of the Biblical Texts – The Historical Books*, BETL 246, Leuven/Paris/Walpole 2012, p. 236-237 (pour 2 R 17.2). Déjà Burney (*Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings with an Introduction and an Appendix*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1903, p. 329) semblait pencher vers la leçon de la LXX en 2 R 17.2.

l'ensemble du temps passé. Si l'on suit le principe, énoncé par Paul de Lagarde, selon lequel le texte grec le plus éloigné du TM doit être tenu pour celui qui reflète l'ancienne Septante — puisque les copistes ont eu tendance à harmoniser les manuscrits grecs avec le TM — alors il faut conclure que le texte antiochien (appuyé par la *Vetus Latina*<sup>8</sup>) correspond à la traduction originelle<sup>9</sup>. En effet, là où le TM et la LXX<sup>B</sup> ont « comme », il affirme « plus que ». La différence entre le TM (כָּל אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה אָבִיו) et la *Vorlage* hébraïque (probablement מְכַל אֲשֶׁר לְפָנָיו) ne semble pas pouvoir s'expliquer par une erreur accidentelle de copie.

Quelle est donc la leçon la plus ancienne ? Schenker a relevé un indice important : la LXX présente ici une tension avec ce que le récit rapporte plus haut au sujet du père d'Achazia (« il n'y a eu personne qui se soit vendu en faisant ce qui déplaisait au Seigneur comme Achab » ; 1 R 21.25). Les deux versets semblent se contredire : quel était le pire, Achab (1 R 21.25) ou Achazia (1 R 22.54) ? Puisque que cette tension est absente du TM, Schenker émet l'hypothèse que ce dernier est le fruit d'une révision qui a lissé le texte<sup>10</sup>. Ce savant étaye son raisonnement en rapprochant la leçon du texte antiochien d'un « plus » propre à cette même tradition textuelle en 2 R 1.6. Dans ce verset, des serviteurs d'Achazia lui répètent mot pour mot un oracle d'Elie, mais dans le texte antiochien, ce discours se prolonge d'une phrase absente des autres témoins textuels :

<sup>8</sup> *Et servivit Baalim et adoravit illi superponens in malitia universis quae gesta erant ante eum* (manuscrits L<sub>92-95</sub> ; voir la note sur le v. 54 dans N. Fernández Marcos et J. R. Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno de la Biblia Griega*, vol. 2 : 1-2 Reyes, TECC, Madrid, Instituto de Filología del Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1992, p. 78).

<sup>9</sup> Du reste, la formulation du Vaticanus, qui vise « toutes les choses qui se sont produites » (πάντα τὰ γεγόμενα) auparavant, dévie par rapport aux expressions parallèles et constitue une singularité car dans les huit autres occurrences des livres des Rois, ce type de formulation réfère toujours à des personnes. Cf. 1 R 3.12 ; 16.25, 30, 33 ; 2 R 17.2 ; 18.5 ; 21.11 ; 23.25 ; le texte précise parfois qu'il s'agit de rois comme en 1 R 16.33 ; 2 R 17.2 ; 18.5 ; 23.25, et d'Amorites en 2 R 21.11.

<sup>10</sup> Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte der Königsbücher*, op. cit., p. 119-121.



« Puisque tu as fait le mal à mes yeux, que tu m'as irrité, voici, j'enverrai un malheur sur la maison d'Achab, je ferai brûler derrière lui, je détruirai complètement d'Achab tous ceux qui urinent contre le mur, esclaves ou hommes libres en Israël. » (καὶ διότι ἐποίησας τὸ πονηρὸν ἐνώπιον μου παροργίσαι με, ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐπάγω κακὰ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἀχαάβ, καὶ ἐκκαύσω ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξολοθρεύσω τοῦ Ἀχαάβ οὐροῦντα πρὸς τοῖχον καὶ συνεχόμενον καὶ ἐγκαταλελειμμένον ἐν Ἰσραήλ.)<sup>11</sup>

L'absence de ce passage dans le TM ne peut s'expliquer par une chute mécanique de type *homoioteleuton* ou *homoiarcton*. Il semble donc que ce « plus » a été soit ajouté dans la LXX ou sa Vorlage (il pourrait remonter à un modèle hébreu<sup>12</sup>), soit omis délibérément dans le TM. Or, on retrouve une phrase similaire adressée à Achab en 1 R 21.20-21 TM (= 20.20-21 LXX) :

« Parce que tu t'es vendu en faisant ce qui déplaisait au Seigneur, je fais venir un malheur sur toi ; je te balaierai, je retrancherai de chez Achab celui qui urine contre le mur, l'esclave comme l'homme libre en Israël... »

Il en résulte qu'Achab et Achazia se voient annoncer la même sanction ; chacun est fait responsable de la fin de la dynastie. Le « plus » renforce donc la tension déjà relevée plus haut en créant une contradiction supplémentaire entre ce qui est dit d'Achab et ce qui est rapporté de son fils. Aux yeux de Schenker, le TM a supprimé ce problème en ôtant la seconde partie de 2 R 1.6 (attestée seulement dans la LXX<sup>1</sup>), de même qu'il avait modifié la comparaison établie en 1 R 22.54. Le substrat de la Septante offrirait un texte plus ancien, dans lequel Achazia était présenté comme « pire » que son père.

Si ce scénario est plausible, il n'est pas sans difficulté. Tout d'abord, au plan méthodologique, on ne peut être certain que les deux variantes en question sont dues à une même main, même s'il est tentant de le penser. Il est concevable qu'un copiste ait effectué l'une des deux modifications, et qu'un scribe ultérieur ait pro-

<sup>11</sup> Voir l'édition de Fernández Marcos et Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno de la Biblia Griega*, op. cit., p. 79-80.

<sup>12</sup> Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte der Königsbücher*, op. cit., p. 120.

cédé à l'autre altération au vu de la première. Quoi qu'il en soit, une même remarque peut être formulée au sujet des deux leçons de la LXX<sup>13</sup>, qu'elles soient solidaires ou non : comme souvent lorsqu'il est question d'une *lectio difficilior*, on peut se demander si cette dernière n'est pas problématique au point de perdre toute crédibilité en tant qu'élément de la rédaction d'origine. La frontière entre « leçon plus difficile » et « leçon invraisemblable » est souvent difficile à tracer. Peut-on attribuer à un rédacteur deutéronomiste (plutôt qu'à des copistes ultérieurs) les tensions bien mises en évidence par Schenker ? Dans l'un comme dans l'autre cas, cela nous semble difficile dans la mesure où la contradiction porte sur un élément central de la logique dtr en 1-2 Rois. Il est peu probable qu'un tel rédacteur se soit contredit de manière aussi évidente, en l'espace de deux ou trois<sup>13</sup> chapitres consécutifs, au sujet de la comparaison entre deux rois et/ou de l'explication fournie à la chute de la dynastie d'Achab. Cela se comprendrait davantage de la part d'un copiste intervenant ici de manière ponctuelle, et n'ayant pas forcément à l'esprit l'ensemble de la logique du livre. Du reste, c'est à Achab qu'un des rédacteurs comparera Manassé (2 R 21.3) : Achazia ne l'a pas détrôné (si l'on peut dire) en tant que « mauvais roi » de référence, comme on pourrait s'y attendre si la leçon de la LXX en 1 R 22.54 remontait à un rédacteur dtr. De fait, il paraît difficile d'imaginer qu'un tel rédacteur ait jugé Achazia « pire » que son père, alors que les fautes qui lui sont attribuées sont nettement moins impressionnantes. En revanche, un copiste a pu assimiler la formulation à celle déjà rencontrée en 14.9 ; 16.25, 30, 35<sup>14</sup> (ce type d'assimilation mécanique se rencontre fréquemment dans les manuscrits).

<sup>13</sup> Rappelons que les chapitres 1 R 20 et 21 apparaissent dans l'ordre inverse dans la Septante.

<sup>14</sup> Ce sont les arguments judicieusement avancés par C. F. Burney (*Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings*, op. cit., p. 260). B. Stade et F. Schwally retiennent également le TM, estimant que la LXX comporte une erreur due au manque de soin du traducteur ou au fait que sa *Vorlage* était illisible ici (*The Books of Kings. Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text with Notes*, Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1904, p. 178).

Quant au « plus » de 2 R 1.6, il pourrait s'agir d'une expansion due à un scribe zélé imitant 1 R 21.20-21<sup>15</sup>. On ne peut du reste pas exclure le scénario d'une addition faite directement en grec sur le modèle de 1 R 21.21. Dans la mesure où les hébraïsmes de 1 R 22.54 étaient déjà présents en grec dans le chapitre précédent<sup>16</sup>, ils ne peuvent prouver au delà de tout doute possible l'existence d'un substrat hébreu. En somme, dans le cas de la formule de comparaison portant sur Achazia et son (ses) prédécesseur(s), la balance des probabilités semble pencher du côté du texte massorétique.

## 2. Osée, dernier roi d'Israël (2 R 17.2)

TM	LXX <sup>B</sup>	LXX <sup>L</sup>
Il fit ce qui le mal aux yeux du Seigneur, <b>non pas toutefois comme</b> (כִּי לֹא כִּי) les rois d'Israël qui l'avaient précédé.	Il fit le mal aux yeux du Seigneur, <b>non pas toutefois comme</b> (πλήν οὐχ ὡς) les rois d'Israël qui furent avant lui.	Et il fit le mal devant le Seigneur <b>plus que tous ceux</b> (παρὰ πάντας) qui étaient venus avant lui.

La différence entre le TM et la LXX se révèle plus criante encore dans le cas d'Osée. Le TM contient une formulation étonnamment nuancée : Osée a fait le mal aux yeux du Seigneur, « non pas toutefois comme les rois d'Israël qui l'avaient précédé » (2 R 17.2). Du côté de la Septante, les témoins divergent. Tandis que la LXX<sup>B</sup> est

<sup>15</sup> Voir Stade et Schwally, *The Books of Kings*, op. cit., p. 179 (« this edifying interpolation, however, merely weakens the effect of Elijah's prediction ») ; Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings*, op. cit., p. 262.

<sup>16</sup> On notera d'ailleurs la présence, dans le texte commun à ce « plus » et à 1 R 21.21, de deux expressions idiomatiques en hébreu traduites littéralement en grec. D'une part, οὐροῦντα πρὸς τοῖχον (« ceux qui urinent contre le mur »), qui apparaît aussi en 1 S 25.22 (et au singulier au v. 34) ; 1 R 14.10 ; 16.11 ; 21.21 ; 2 R 9.8 ; elle rend à chaque fois l'hébreu מִשְׁתִּין בְּקִיר. D'autre part, καὶ συνεχόμενον καὶ ἐγκαταλειμμένον ἐν Ἰσραὴλ (« esclave ou homme libre en Israël ») qui sert à plusieurs reprises de mérisme pour désigner la totalité des êtres masculins en question dans un récit ; on la trouve en 1 R 21.21 et 2 R 9.8 où elle rend à chaque fois l'expression hébraïque עֶצֶר וְעֶזְבָּר.

conforme au TM, la LXX<sup>L</sup> (étayée par la *Vetus Latina*<sup>17</sup>) affirme qu'Osée fit le mal aux yeux du Seigneur « plus que tous ceux qui l'avaient précédé ». Ici encore, le principe de Paul de Lagarde suggère que la LXX<sup>L</sup> correspond à l'ancienne Septante. Son substrat probable (מכל אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ ou מכל אֲשֶׁר לְפָנָיו)<sup>18</sup> diffère du TM d'une manière telle qu'on ne saurait s'expliquer la variante par un accident de copie : le texte a été délibérément altéré.

Or, plusieurs chercheurs ont récemment défendu le scénario selon lequel la *Vorlage* de la LXX représente un état textuel plus ancien que le TM. Schenker estime que le texte qui en résulte correspond bien à la logique des Rois ; cependant, c'est sans véritable argumentation qu'il écarte l'hypothèse inverse, selon laquelle la LXX aurait accablé Osée<sup>19</sup>. Selon Piquer Otero, le TM aurait atténué le jugement porté sur Osée parce qu'il était incongru de présenter ce roi d'importance tout à fait mineure (sa notice ne fait que quelques lignes, aucune faute religieuse précise n'est mentionnée) comme « pire » que Jéroboam I, Omri et Achab<sup>20</sup>. Cependant, la remarque de Piquer Otero sur la difficulté que présente ici la LXX est si judicieuse qu'elle pourrait même conduire à se demander si cette leçon est crédible en tant que rédaction d'origine (on retrouve ici le problème déjà rencontré plus haut au sujet d'une *lectio difficilior*). En effet, les rédacteurs des Rois ont pour habitude de détailler les fautes des souverains dont le comportement a le plus grand retentissement pour le pays ; on s'explique particulièrement mal l'absence de tels détails au sujet d'Osée, s'il fut le pire des rois d'Israël (et que la chute de Samarie eut lieu durant son règne). Une comparaison avec les réquisitoires formulés à l'encontre de Jéroboam I, d'Achab ou encore de Manassé (quelle que soit la tradition textuelle) est éloquent à cet égard.

<sup>17</sup> On lit *et fecit malignum in conspectu Domini prae omnes qui fuerant ante eum* dans L<sub>91</sub>, et *fecit male in conspectu Domini super omnes qui fuerunt ante eum* dans L<sub>115</sub> (voir la note sur ce verset dans Fernández Marcos et Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno de la Biblia Griega*, op. cit., p. 131).

<sup>18</sup> Voir Piquer Otero, « What Text to Edit? », op. cit., p. 230-231.

<sup>19</sup> Schenker, *Älteste Textgeschichte der Königsbücher*, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>20</sup> Piquer Otero, « What Text to Edit? », op. cit., p. 237.

Trebolle adopte une autre approche, séduisante parce que fondée sur des éléments d'ordre formel plutôt que sur des considérations sur les tendances supposées des scribes ou des traducteurs. Il note d'abord que la formule « non pas toutefois comme » (רק לא כִּ) n'apparaît qu'en deux autres endroits (2 R 3.2 ; 14.3) ; or, selon lui, il s'agit dans ces deux cas d'« ajouts “nomistes” (DtrN) ou même plutôt des gloses plus récentes »<sup>21</sup>. Il en déduit que la leçon du TM est également tardive en 2 R 17.2 (elle y aurait remplacé celle de la LXX). En outre, Trebolle estime que la leçon de la LXX permet de retrouver une structure concentrique propre à la rédaction dtr josianique<sup>22</sup> :

« L'expression de refus absolu, *mkl*, s'applique seulement au premier et au dernier roi d'Israël, Jéroboam et Osée, ainsi qu'à Omri et Achab, spécialement visés par les historiens deutéronomistes. Pour le royaume de Juda, ce refus absolu ne vise que Roboam (1 R 14.22, 24), premier roi de la monarchie divisée, et Manassé (2 R 21.11), successeur d'Ezéchias et prédécesseur de Josias<sup>23</sup>. »

Cette analyse paraît à la fois brillante et discutable. D'une part, est-il sûr que les apparitions de la formule en מכל en 2 R 3.2 et 14.3 relèvent d'ajouts plus ou moins tardifs, et qu'il en est de même pour 2 R 17.2 ? Trebolle mentionne deux analyses pour les premiers versets : des ajouts dus à DtrN ou des gloses plus récentes encore. Commençons par examiner la première hypothèse, inspirée en partie du commentaire de Würthwein. En 2 R 3.2-3, celui-ci détecte une *Wiederaufnahme* du fait de la répétition de רק, en notant avec finesse que la seconde occurrence de cette particule renvoie à une clause précédant sa première occurrence :

<sup>21</sup> Trebolle Barrera, « Histoire du texte des livres historiques », *op. cit.*, p. 337. Dans le même sens, voir P. Torijano Morales, « Textual Criticism and the Text-Critical Edition of IV Regnorum. The Case of 17.2-6 », in Ausloos, Lemmelijn, Trebolle Barrera (éd.), *After Qumran*, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>22</sup> Trebolle Barrera, « Histoire du texte des livres historiques... », *op. cit.*, p. 337-339. Voir déjà id., *Centena in libros Samuelis et Regum*, *op. cit.*, p. 188-193.

<sup>23</sup> Trebolle Barrera, « Histoire du texte des livres historiques... », *op. cit.*, p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> וַיַּעֲשֶׂה הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה

רַק לֹא כָאֲבִיו וְכָאִמּוֹ וַיִּסָּר אֶת־מַעֲבַת הַבַּעַל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אָבִיו

<sup>3</sup> רַק בַּחֲטָאוֹת יִרְבְּעוּ בְּיָדָם בְּיָנֹכְבַּת אֲשֶׁר־הִחֲטִיֵּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל דָּבַק לֹא־סָר מִמֶּנָּה ס

Würthwein attribue la clause encadrée ainsi à DtrN au motif que la formule « non pas comme ses parents » fait écho à une clause similaire en 1 R 22.53. Il avait en effet déjà classée celle-ci comme DtrN, parce que le reproche fait aux Omrides d'adorer les Baals serait caractéristique de cette couche rédactionnelle<sup>24</sup>. Ce raisonnement paraît fragile : la critique du baalisme chez les Omrides pourrait bien remonter à une rédaction plus ancienne<sup>25</sup>. Or l'attribution à DtrN de la formule introduite par רַק en 2 R 14.3 ne repose apparemment que sur l'idée que c'était déjà le cas en 2 R 3.2 ; on ne dispose pas dans ce dernier verset d'indice formel qu'une insertion a eu lieu, et Würthwein n'apporte pas de justification supplémentaire<sup>26</sup>. S'il est, de fait, plausible que les clauses en question proviennent de la même main, on voit que leur attribution à DtrN repose sur une base ténue et sujette à débat, même parmi ceux qui adoptent un modèle diachronique intégrant une telle rédaction<sup>27</sup>. En outre, il ne s'ensuivrait pas nécessairement qu'il en est de même de 2 R 17.2 : de fait, Würthwein lui-même classe ce verset (dans sa forme massorétique) parmi les textes dus à DtrG<sup>28</sup>.

Cela étant, Treballe semble préférer aller plus loin que Würthwein et voir dans les trois versets en question des gloses encore plus tardives que DtrN, sans toutefois entrer dans une argumentation à l'appui de cette affirmation. Il nous paraît plus probable d'y voir le travail d'un rédacteur dtr, sans exclure abso-

<sup>24</sup> Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige*. op. cit., p. 279.

<sup>25</sup> Voir par exemple D. Nocquet, *Le livret noir de Baal. La polémique contre le dieu Baal dans la Bible hébraïque et l'ancien Israël*, Actes et recherches, Genève, Labor et Fides, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 371.

<sup>27</sup> Nous n'entrons pas ici dans le débat sur la validité de ce modèle.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 391, 393, 513.

lument la possibilité d'une origine pré-dtr, encore défendue par certains chercheurs<sup>29</sup>.

D'autre part, si l'idée d'une structure concentrique est astucieuse, il est difficile de dire si elle relève d'une redécouverte ou d'une projection faite sur le texte, car il n'existe aucun lien nécessaire entre une telle structure et la théologie deutéronomiste. Celle-ci n'implique en rien que le premier et le dernier roi soient les pires, comme en témoigne le fait que ce ne sera pas le cas dans l'édition finale des Rois. Il n'y a pas non plus de raison pour laquelle cela aurait dû être une caractéristique d'une édition faite sous Josias, excepté la satisfaction esthétique due à la symétrie, mais on a peine à croire qu'un tel principe ait gouverné la manière dont un rédacteur a évalué les rois.

Dans ces conditions, le scénario plus traditionnel pourrait bien être, somme toute, le meilleur. Il stipule que le rédacteur d'origine portait un regard nuancé sur Osée, peut-être parce qu'il disposait de sources contenant des informations en ce sens<sup>30</sup> ; un copiste aurait ensuite estimé que ce roi devait nécessairement avoir eu un comportement religieux pire que celui de ses prédécesseurs, dans la mesure où la chute d'Israël était intervenue sous son règne<sup>31</sup>. De fait, dans le texte massorétique, la responsabilité d'Osée se voit dépeinte d'une manière paradoxale. D'un côté, Osée a joué un rôle indéniable dans la chaîne d'événements menant à la répression assyrienne, puisqu'il a cessé de payer le tribut et a conspiré avec un dirigeant étranger (2 R 17.4). D'un autre côté, le lecteur qui s'attendrait à une corrélation simple entre le comportement spirituel du roi et le sort d'Israël en est pour ses frais :

<sup>29</sup> A. F. Campbell et M. A. O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomic History. Origins, Upgrades, Present Text*, Minneapolis, Fortress, 2000, p. 413, 441. Quant à 2 R 14.3, ils classent ce verset dans la catégorie « other » (p. 435).

<sup>30</sup> Montgomery et Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings*, op. cit., p. 464-465.

<sup>31</sup> Stade, Schwally, *The Books of Kings*, op. cit., p. 260 ; Šanda, *Die Bücher der Könige*, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 212 ; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, op. cit., p. 196. Benzinger (*Die Bücher der Könige*, op. cit., p. 172) offre une variation sur le même thème, avec une explication davantage liée au destin personnel d'Osée : la LXX aurait modifié la comparaison sur Osée « um seinen Wert mit seinem traurigen Los in Einklang zu bringen ». Hobbs (*2 Kings*, op. cit., p. 220, 221, 228) mentionne la variante et adopte le TM sans discussion.

c'est durant le règne d'un homme agissant d'une manière « moins mauvaise » que ses prédécesseurs que la sanction divine s'abat sur le pays.

En réalité, le copiste en question n'aurait pas bien compris la théologie du livre des Rois, puisque celle-ci ne fait guère intervenir le principe de rétribution « immédiate » qu'on rencontre dans les Chroniques ; au contraire, on y trouve plusieurs cas de sanction ajournée (e.g. 1 R 21.29). Le cas d'Osée, dernier roi d'Israël, serait plutôt comparable à celui de Sédécias, dernier roi de Juda. Aucun des deux ne représentait le « pire » des dirigeants de leur pays au regard de la théologie deutéronomiste, mais chacun a pris une décision (se rebeller contre le suzerain mésopotamien) qui fut la cause politique et immédiate de la chute de leur royaume. Dans les deux cas, la logique dtr situe la cause profonde ailleurs : une faute (religieuse) collective (l'ensemble des Israélites étant coupables, selon 2 R 17.7ss<sup>32</sup>) ou individuelle mais attribuée à un prédécesseur (Manassé). Le fait que 2 R 17.7ss contienne une étiologie collective suggère bien que le début du chapitre n'établissait pas de lien direct entre le comportement d'Osée et la chute de Samarie<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifices*, op. cit., p. 42. La faute collective est présente en 2 R 17ss dans le TM, dans LXX<sup>B</sup> et LXX<sup>L</sup>, mais aussi la *Vetus Latina*, en dépit de l'agencement différent attesté par le *Codex Vindobonensis* (L<sub>115</sub>). Dans ce dernier, on trouve la séquence suivante : v. 7, 19, 9 ; la suite n'est pas préservée (voir B. Fischer, « Palimpsestus Vindobonensis. A Revised Edition of £115 for Samuel-Kings », *BIOSCS* 16, 1983, p. 86-87). Comme l'écrit Piquer Otero, on peut présumer que le v. 9 était ici suivi des v. 10-14 (« What Text to Edit? », op. cit., p. 239), mais en tous les cas, les versets préservés de ce manuscrit suffisent à montrer que l'étiologie y était collective.

<sup>33</sup> Il existe peut-être une raison supplémentaire de douter de l'hypothèse selon laquelle la LXX<sup>L</sup> reflète un texte plus ancien que le TM, ici comme en 1 R 22.54 (au sujet d'Achazia). En effet, il semble que le recours à παρὰ en 1 R 22.54 et 2 R 17.2 dans la LXX<sup>L</sup> constitue un écart à l'usage habituel dans 1-2 Rois, où l'on rencontre ὑπερ dans toutes les formules similaires de comparaison entre un roi et son ou ses prédécesseur(s) ; dans la LXX<sup>B</sup>, on ne rencontre jamais παρὰ dans les versets concernés. Voici la liste des versets pertinents (nous indiquons entre parenthèses la numérotation de l'édition de LXX<sup>L</sup> par Fernández Marcos et Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno de la Biblia Griega*, op. cit., quand elle diffère) : 1 R 16.25, 30 (= v.39 LXX<sup>L</sup>), 33 (= v. 42 LXX<sup>L</sup>) ; 2 R 5.12 ; auxquels on peut ajouter 1 R 5.11 (= 4.28 LXX<sup>L</sup>) ; 1 R 10.23 (= 10.26 LXX<sup>L</sup>). D'autres versets ne se prêtent pas à la com-



### 3. Manassé, dernier roi de Juda (2 R 21.11)

Reste à considérer le cas de Manassé ; le tableau ci-après illustre les différences textuelles en 2 R 21.11.

TM	LXX <sup>B</sup>	LXX <sup>L</sup>
Manassé a fait ces abominations et <i>a fait le mal</i> <b>plus que</b> tout (מָלַךְ) ce qu’avaient fait les Amorites avant lui.	Manassé roi de Juda a fait ces abominations mauvaises <b>au delà de/ d’après</b> (ἀπὸ) tout ce qu’a fait l’Amorite avant lui.	Manassé a fait ces abominations <b>mauvaises selon</b> (κατὰ) tout ce qu’avaient fait les Amorites qui étaient dans le pays avant lui.

Ici, la LXX<sup>B</sup> peut théoriquement être comprise de deux manières, comme indiqué dans le tableau. La *New English Translation of the Septuagint* traduit ici ἀπὸ par « *from* », mais indique en note « *beyond* » comme autre possibilité. La *Septuaginta Deutsch* marque apparemment une hésitation par l’usage de parenthèses : « (schlimmer als) alles, was der Amorräer vorher getan hatte ». Quoi qu’il en soit, la *Vorlage* serait la même, faisant intervenir מָלַךְ ; il est d’autres cas où la préposition a été comprise dans un sens partitif plutôt que comparatif par le traducteur, dans un contexte similaire (e.g. 1 R 14.22). Mais, précisément, cela suggère qu’il faut chercher du côté de LXX<sup>L</sup> (appuyée par la *Vetus Latina*<sup>34</sup>) le texte le

paraît : 1 R 14.9 est absent de la LXX ; en 1 R 14.22 le traducteur n’a pas compris מָלַךְ dans un sens comparatif ; en 2 R 21.11, la LXX<sup>B</sup> a ὑπερ, mais la LXX<sup>L</sup> reflète une *Vorlage* différente (voir *infra*). Cela trahirait-il le fait que la leçon παρὰ relève d’une altération faite durant la transmission du texte grec (par une main différente des traducteurs initiaux, donc) ? Dans ce cas, la LXX<sup>B</sup>, avec sa leçon, aurait conservé quelque chose de la Septante ancienne, même si elle paraît également avoir été affectée en partie (elle semble constituer un compromis entre TM et LXX<sup>L</sup>). On aurait là une illustration des limites du principe formulé par Paul de Lagarde. Cependant, une vérification de cette hypothèse nécessiterait une étude générale de la technique de traduction de la particule comparative מן dans les Règles, qui dépasse le cadre de cet article.

<sup>34</sup> Il s’agit d’une citation de Lucifer de Cagliari : *quia fecit Manasses rex Iuda simulacra, secundum omnia quae fecit Amorrhæus qui erat ante faciem eius* (G. F. Diercks, *Luciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 8, Turnhout, Brepols, 1978, p. 153).

plus éloigné du TM, et peut-être le meilleur reflet de l'ancienne Septante.

Comme nous l'avions indiqué en introduction, Achab fait aussi l'objet d'une comparaison moins accablante avec les Amorites : « il a agi de manière abominable en suivant les idoles, *comme* tout ce qu'avaient fait les Amorites que le Seigneur avait dépossédés devant les fils d'Israël » (1 R 21.26)<sup>35</sup>. Dans le TM, Manassé est donc accusé d'avoir un comportement « pire » que celui d'Achab. Dès lors, il est tentant de penser que TM n'a fait ici qu'accentuer une tendance du texte à accabler Manassé. De fait, les exégètes ont amplement démontré que le passage attribue à ce roi la plus longue liste de fautes jamais prêtées à un dirigeant judéen, et ils ont mis évidence de nombreux parallèles établis par le texte, explicitement ou non, entre le règne de Manassé et celui des « mauvais » rois Achab, Achaz et Jéroboam I<sup>36</sup>.

Cette idée se verrait renforcée s'il existait dans le TM d'autres altérations délibérées visant à aggraver encore le discrédit de Manassé<sup>37</sup>. Mais dans la plupart des cas possibles, il semble que cette thèse ne s'impose pas :

- D'après le v. 3, Manassé a bâti des autels pour Baal et fabriqué une *ashéra* (selon le TM), ou construit un autel pour Baal et fait des *ashéras* (selon la LXX et la *Vetus Latina*). Selon une explication possible, le TM a normalisé le texte en usant du singulier pour Baal comme pour *ashéra*, ce qui aurait pour effet de créer un lien entre cette dernière mention et la statue d'Ashéra apportée dans le Temple selon le v. 7. Il pourrait être moins grave d'ériger des *ashéras* (au sens de poteaux cultuels)

<sup>35</sup> On peut y ajouter que dans un verset propre au TM on lit que, sous Jéroboam I, le peuple « agit selon toutes les abominations des nations que le Seigneur avait dépossédées devant les fils d'Israël » (1 R 14.24).

<sup>36</sup> E. Eynikel, « The Portrait of Manasseh and the Deuteronomistic History », *op. cit.*, p. 233-261, spéc. 259-260 ; E. Ben Zvi, « The Account of the Reign of Manasseh in II Reg 21,1-18 and the Redactional History of the Book of Kings », *ZAW* 103, 1991, p. 355-374, spéc. 360 ; van Keulen, *Manasseh Through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists*, *op. cit.*, p. 146-154.

<sup>37</sup> Schenker, « The Septuagint in the Text History of 1-2 Kings », *op. cit.*, p. 3-17.

hors du temple (Septante) que de fabriquer une statue qui sera ensuite transférée au sein même du Temple (TM). En outre, le TM aurait aggravé le cas de Manassé en évoquant une pluralité d'autels dédiés à Baal<sup>38</sup>. Toutefois, s'il y a eu normalisation par passage au singulier au v. 3, il paraît difficile d'affirmer que le motif en était théologique plutôt que simplement formel. En réalité, la formulation du v. 7 crée une analepse laissant entendre que le texte a déjà évoqué la fabrication de la statue en question (« la statue d'Ashéra qu'il avait faite » ; אֲתֶּפֶסֶל הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה). Or, seule la mention d'Ashéra au v. 3, au singulier comme dans le TM, est susceptible de correspondre à cela. Quoi qu'il en soit, selon tous les témoins, Manassé est bel et bien tenu pour responsable de l'installation de la statue dans le Temple au v. 7, de sorte que l'éventuelle nuance entre le TM et la LXX est ténue. En dernière analyse, les oscillations entre pluriel et singulier pour les termes « Baal » et « ashéra » sont telles dans les textes qu'il paraît difficile de fonder dessus une identification des tendances des scribes. De même, le pluriel הַבָּמֹת est si fréquent dans 1-2 Rois que, même en admettant qu'il est secondaire ici, l'explication la plus sobre pointerait une assimilation à la forme la plus répandue et non une correction idéologique.

- Le v. 4, qui évoque la construction par Manassé d'autels dans le Temple, avec une citation du Seigneur soulignant la gravité de l'acte (« dont le Seigneur avait dit : “c'est à Jérusalem que je placerai mon nom” »), est absent de la *Vetus Latina*, et il en aurait été de même de l'ancienne Septante. Le TM contiendrait ici une addition<sup>39</sup>, accablante pour ce roi<sup>40</sup>. Van Keulen a cependant noté, à juste titre, que le verset a pu chuter par *homioarcton*, puisque les débuts des v. 4 et 5 sont presque identiques<sup>41</sup>. Schenker estime néanmoins surprenant qu'une phrase si centrale pour le passage ait été omise par

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9-11, pour tous ces arguments.

<sup>39</sup> Trebolle Barrera, *Centena in libros Samuelis et Regum*, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>40</sup> Schenker, « The Septuagint in the Text History of 1-2 Kings », op. cit., p. 7-8.

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<sup>41</sup> Van Keulen, *Manasseh Through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists*, op. cit., p. 56-57.

accident<sup>42</sup>, mais il est difficile de penser que les versets importants aient été préservés des accidents de copie, qui, par nature, relèvent d'erreurs inconscientes.

- Le TM mentionne une pluralité d'autels (מִזְבְּחוֹת) au v. 5, quand la Septante utilise le singulier (θυσιαστήριον), et il indique qu'ils sont dédiés à « toute l'armée du ciel » (לְכָל-צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם), mention absente du texte grec. Ici encore, il paraît encore plus gênant pour Manassé, au regard de la théologie deutéronomiste, d'avoir multiplié les autels pour des divinités astrales que d'en avoir érigé un seul. Cependant, une explication plus sobre qu'une intervention théologique est possible, et sans doute préférable. La mention de « l'armée du ciel » se comprend très bien comme expansion scribale due à l'influence de l'occurrence de la même expression au v. 3 (ce type d'expansion est fréquent dans la transmission textuelle de 1-2 Rois). Ensuite, le passage au pluriel pourrait procéder d'une adaptation au contexte immédiat, puisque la construction est dédiée à une multiplicité de divinités : un copiste a pu présumer que cela supposait plusieurs autels<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> A. Schenker, « The Septuagint in the Text History of 1-2 Kings », *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Signalons une autre différence intéressante. Au v. 6, le grec comme le latin mentionnent le passage par le feu de plusieurs enfants par Manassé, et non d'un seul fils comme dans l'hébreu. Plus précisément, dans la Septante, on rencontre un pluriel et un verbe à l'imparfait : « il faisait passer ses fils par le feu » ; le texte antiochien évoque plus largement des « enfants » (τεκνῶ) ; la *Vetus Latina* a ici : *et induxit filios suos in ignem* (Diercks, *Luciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt*, *op. cit.*, p. 153). Comme le note Schenker, la leçon du TM pourrait s'expliquer par une volonté de rendre le texte plus logique, puisque la suite du texte montre qu'il reste à Manassé au moins un fils : Amon, son successeur (*ibid.*, p. 8). De notre point de vue, il n'est pas certain qu'il y ait là une contradiction avec la forme du v. 6 attestée dans la Septante (ou sa *Vorlage*), puisque ce dernier verset peut se comprendre de façon assez souple comme évoquant une pratique répétée de Manassé sans aller jusqu'à impliquer que tous ses fils en ont été victimes : il ne convient pas de presser le sens du verbe. Quoi qu'il en soit, il est vrai qu'un copiste pourrait avoir perçu ici une tension trop forte et avoir été amené à corriger en un singulier, parvenant ainsi à la leçon du TM. Cela étant, le TM a recours à une forme verbale équivoque : וְהֵעִבִּיר peut théoriquement s'analyser aussi bien comme un *we* + *qatal* évoquant un événement ponctuel du passé que comme un *weqatal* à valeur itérative ou fréquentative (à ce sujet voir J. Joosten, *The Verbal*

Une explication encore plus simple consisterait à voir ici une assimilation à la forme plurielle rencontrée pour le même mot dans les phrases précédentes (v. 3, 4<sup>44</sup>).

Si donc la leçon du TM au v. 11 relève d'une modification visant à accabler Manassé, il s'agit de la seule altération en ce sens dans le passage — ce qui reste parfaitement possible. À cela s'ajoute le fait que la variante repose sur une différence d'une lettre, כ ou מ, dont il n'est pas impensable qu'un scribe les ait confondues, surtout si son manuscrit-modèle était défectueux. Mais d'autres considérations permettent peut-être de trancher de manière plus assurée quant à la forme de texte la plus ancienne des deux.

Tout d'abord, un autre aspect du passage sur Manassé mérite considération : il contient deux clauses dont on peut rapprocher le v. 11 (elles sont sensiblement identiques dans le TM et la LXX) :

« (Manassé) fit ce qui déplaisait au Seigneur comme les abominations des nations... » (v. 2 litt.) ;

« (les Israélites) firent plus de mal que les nations... » (v. 9).

À la lumière de ces similarités, on pourrait envisager deux scénarios concurrents :

- la leçon « comme » de la LXX<sup>L</sup> au v. 11 serait due à une assimilation à la formulation du v. 2 ;
- la leçon « plus que » dans le TM du v. 11 proviendrait d'une assimilation à la formulation du v. 9.

*System of Biblical Hebrew. A New Synthesis Elaborated on the Basis of Classical Prose*, Jerusalem Biblical Studies 10, Jérusalem, Simor, 2012, p. 305ss). Si le traducteur a compris de la seconde manière, il a pu utiliser l'imparfait et le pluriel « ses fils » par souci de clarté ; cela expliquerait aussi le pluriel « ses fils » dans le passage parallèle des Chroniques (2 Ch 33.6). En tout état de cause, il n'y a pas ici de variante idéologique.

<sup>44</sup> Le fait que l'on rencontre dans ces versets une écriture défective (מִזְבְּחֹת) ne change rien à ce raisonnement ; le recours à une *mater lectionis* a pu être variable, et sa présence évoluer durant la transmission du texte.

En faveur de la seconde théorie, on peut remarquer que le v. 9 précède de peu le v. 11, de sorte qu'un scribe avait probablement en mémoire la formulation qu'on y rencontre, ce qui pourrait avoir induit la modification de manière mécanique, par inadvertance. La même assimilation aurait aussi pu se faire délibérément, afin de supprimer une incongruité contenue dans la *Vorlage* de la LXX : elle affirme au v. 9 que les Israélites ont fait « pire » que ces nations, sous l'influence de leur dirigeant, mais, au v. 11, que ce dernier a seulement agi « comme » les nations.

Ce dernier argument est toutefois réversible. En effet, est-il vraisemblable que l'incongruité en question ait déjà été présente dans le texte le plus ancien, les v. 9 et 11 étant généralement attribués à un même rédacteur<sup>45</sup> ? Il semble plus difficile de mettre cette anomalie sur le compte d'un même rédacteur que sur celui d'un copiste intervenant de manière ponctuelle sur le texte. De plus, on peut noter au crédit de la première hypothèse que le v. 2 concerne Manassé lui-même, comme le v. 11. En ce sens, on peut plaider que la pression en direction d'un alignement sur le v. 2 était forte, parce que dans le TM, ces deux versets semblent en tension : le roi a-t-il fait « comme les abominations des nations » ou « pire » qu'elles ? Cette fois, il est possible d'envisager que la tension était présente dans la rédaction d'origine, car elle pourrait bien n'être que de surface. On peut en effet comprendre que le v. 2 tient un propos « qualitatif » : Manassé a reproduit les types d'agissements (« comme/selon les abominations ») des nations, tandis que le v. 11 relève d'une logique quantitative : Manassé a commis le mal « plus que » ces peuples. Mais on comprend aisément qu'un scribe ait pu ressentir le besoin de lisser le texte en alignant le v. 11 sur le v. 2.

La balance des probabilités nous semble donc pencher dans le sens du TM (en termes d'ancienneté de la leçon du v. 11), mais il est clair que tout jugement repose ici sur une appréciation des in-

<sup>45</sup> Les études de critique rédactionnelle attribuent généralement les v. 9 et 11 à une même main ; voir le tableau comparatif établi par Smelik (*Converting the Past*, op. cit., p. 165) ou encore S. L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings. The Composition of the Books of Kings in the Deuteronomic History*, VTSup 42, Leiden 1991, p. 143-144 (en substance, les v. 8-15 seraient de Dtr2).

tentions des scribes et de ce qui a pu leur paraître des tensions ou des contradictions, ce qui demeure inévitablement subjectif.

Une dernière considération, certes indirecte, doit être mentionnée car elle va dans le même sens. En effet, une étude serrée du passage montre que même en laissant de côté le v. 11, la péricope contient suffisamment d'éléments incriminant Manassé pour faire de lui le pire de tous les rois, judéens comme israélites :

« no other king is reputed to have perpetrated all the acts of idolatry that Manasseh did. Other kings are only accused of some of Manasseh's sins. This means that Manasseh is even worse than notorious monarchs like Jeroboam I, Baasha, Ahab and Ahaz. His reign constitutes the nadir of the history of kingship in Israel »<sup>46</sup>.

Dans ces conditions, puisqu'il est dit d'Achab a agi « comme » les Amorites et que la stratégie du texte vise à montrer que Manassé fut « pire » que lui (notamment), il est plausible que le texte d'origine affirmait que Manassé a davantage commis le mal que cette population cananéenne.

## Conclusion

Les formules de comparaison entre plusieurs rois (Achazia, Osée, Manassé) et leurs prédécesseurs font l'objet de variantes intéressantes dans la LXX, qui induisent une représentation différente de la manière dont la déviance religieuse, au regard de la théologie deutéronomiste, a progressé en Israël et en Juda. Il s'agit d'un enjeu important pour la logique même du livre des Rois, qui n'a pourtant pas été sondé suffisamment dans la recherche passée. Or, si plusieurs grands spécialistes de la traduction des Règles ont récemment pris parti en faveur de la priorité de la *Vorlage* de la LXX dans le cas d'Achazia (1 R 22.54) et/ou d'Osée (2 R 17.2), nous sommes conduits à conclure que cette hypothèse ne s'impose pas. Le TM nous semble également refléter le texte le plus ancien dans

<sup>46</sup> Smelik, *Converting the Past*, op. cit., p. 148-149 (on notera que la démonstration ne repose pas sur le v. 11 et demeure valide quel que soit le témoin textuel).

le cas de Manassé (2 R 21.11), même s'il faut reconnaître qu'il ne s'agit là que d'une probabilité légèrement supérieure. La Septante dévoile certes, en bien des endroits de 1-2 Rois, un texte plus ancien que le TM, mais ce ne semble pas le cas ici. Si nos raisonnements sont justes, Achab et Manassé méritent de conserver leurs titres de rois les plus réprouvés par les deutéronomistes.



# La diversité des sources du manuscrit de Leningrad B19a

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**Abstract.** *The colophon found on folio 479r of the Leningrad Codex EBP. I B19a asserts that the text, the punctuation and the masorah of this manuscript were written by one scribe. However, a close examination of the text and of the masorah shows that they reflect a diversity of scribes and sources. Rather than explaining the text, there are cases where scribes who intervened in the manuscript just preserved the masoretic material they had at their disposal.*

## 1. Identifier les sources du manuscrit de Leningrad par ses colophons ?

Nous avons pris l'habitude de situer les manuscrits en nous basant sur les informations contenues dans leurs colophons. Le colophon (κολοφών : couronnement, achèvement) est supposé donner les indications sur l'identité du scribe, le lieu et la date du manuscrit ainsi que le destinataire ou le commanditaire. Or, le manuscrit de Leningrad B19a (M<sup>L</sup> : le texte massorétique tel qu'il apparaît dans le manuscrit de Leningrad), qui sert de base pour les éditions de la BHS et de la BHQ, comporte plusieurs colophons<sup>1</sup>. Ils se trouvent aussi bien avant qu'après le texte biblique, à la première comme à la troisième personne. La différence de style et de terminologie laisse penser que ces colophons proviennent de mains différentes. On relèvera par exemple que le colo-

<sup>1</sup> Voir David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Leningrad Codex. A Facsimile Edition*, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K. : William B. Eerdmans, Leiden/New York/Köln : Brill Academic Publishers, 1998. Pour l'observation du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>, j'ai utilisé les nouvelles photographies en couleurs de Bruce E. Zuckerman, West Semitic Research Project.

phon du folio 474r, écrit à la première personne, appelle le manuscrit un *miṣḥaf* (מִצְחָף : un codex), alors que celui du folio 479r, écrit à la troisième personne, le nomme *maḥzor* (מַחְזֹר : livre de textes liturgiques [lectionnaire]). Le premier terme renvoie à la forme du manuscrit, alors que le deuxième fait allusion à son usage.

Le premier colophon du folio 1r, juste avant le texte biblique, précise le lieu, la date et le commanditaire et destinataire du manuscrit. Ce sont les colophons placés après les longues listes de la massorah finalis qui précisent le nom du scribe et répètent celui du destinataire. Par ces colophons, nous apprenons que le texte, la ponctuation et les massores ont été notés par une seule et même personne, à savoir Shemuel Ben Ya'akov<sup>2</sup>. Le manuscrit est dédié à « Mevorakh ben Yossef HaKohen (ben Nathanaël), connu comme Ben Ozdad ».

De tous les colophons du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>, c'est celui qui se trouve au folio 479r (au milieu de la décoration en forme d'étoile) qui nous apporte l'information sur les sources utilisées par le scribe.

שמואל בן יעקב כתב ונקד ומסר את המחזור הזה שלמך מן הספרים המוגהים  
המבואר אשר עשה המלמד אהרן בן משה בן אשר נוחו בגן עדן והוא מוגה  
באר היטב

« Shemuel ben Ya'akov a écrit, ponctué et muni de la massorah ce manuscrit de l'Écri[ture] à partir des livres corrigés et clair[s] qu'a faits le maître Aharon ben Moshé ben Asher, son repos (soit) au jardin d'Éden. Et il (le manuscrit) est corrigé et rendu clair ».

<sup>2</sup> Voir les colophons des folios 474r et 479r. Une pratique similaire est évoquée pour le manuscrit des Prophètes du Caire. Pour d'autres manuscrits, comme celui d'Alep ou le EBP. II B 17 de St Petersburg, un scribe a écrit le texte consonantique alors qu'un massorète a ajouté la ponctuation et la massorah. Voir Malachi Beit-Arié, Colette Sirat, Mordechai Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis litteris exarati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes*, Tome I, jusqu'à 1020, Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi. Series Hebraica, Paris/Jerusalem : Brepols, 1997, p. 53-55, 65-68, 115-117.

Ce colophon laisse donc penser que le scribe du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> a travaillé seul en se basant sur les travaux du massorète tiberien le plus réputé. De ce fait, il lie le destin du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> à celui de l'école des célèbres massorètes de Tibériade. L'observation et le rapprochement des contenus du manuscrit permettent cependant d'y apporter quelques nuances. Les chercheurs observent par exemple qu'au niveau de la ponctuation, le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> s'accorde avec la tradition des Ben Asher à 92 %<sup>3</sup>. Le décalage entre les données du texte et celles de la massorah s'explique principalement par la diversité des sources utilisées<sup>4</sup>. Certaines observations laissent même penser que le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>, tel que nous l'avons aujourd'hui, n'est pas le fruit du travail d'une seule personne. Shemuel Ben Ya'akov a sûrement fait le gros du travail, mais d'autres interventions sont également décelables. Je préfère donc de parler globalement des scribes, au pluriel.

L'observation du texte et de la massorah confirme la multiplicité des sources du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>, mais elle ne confirme pas que ces sources venaient toutes d'Aaron ben Moshé ben Asher, à moins que lui même ait compilé des matériaux de diverses provenances. Sur ce point, on ne peut donc pas suivre l'hypothèse de Ginsburg selon laquelle Shemuel ben Ya'akov aurait recopié le manuscrit d'Alep, lorsque celui-ci fut déplacé de Jérusalem au Caire<sup>5</sup>. En revanche, les corrections observables aussi bien dans le texte que dans la massorah suggèrent effectivement que le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> a été retouché à plusieurs endroits<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Voir Ernest J. Revell, « The Leningrad Codex as a Representative of the Masoretic Text », in David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Leningrad Codex*, p. xxix-xlvi, spécialement p. xxxvi.

<sup>4</sup> Israel Yeivin signale que les notes massorétiques pouvaient être ajoutées au texte sans vérifier si elles étaient en accord ou en conflit avec son texte. Voir Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Massorah*, Masoretic Studies 5, Missoula, Montana : Scholars Press, 1980, p. 123-124.

<sup>5</sup> Christian David Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*, London : Trinitarian Bible Society, 1897. Réimpression : Hoboken, New Jersey : Ktav Publishing House, 1966, p. 242-244.

<sup>6</sup> Aron Dotan, « Deviation in Gemination in the Tiberian Vocalization », Appendice D dans Aron Dotan (ed.) *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia*, Peabody, Massachusetts : Hendrickson Publishers, 2001, p. 1243-1251.

Les scribes du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> ont visiblement utilisé des listes massorétiques provenant des milieux différents. Que la massorah magna et la massorah parva du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> n'aient pas été composées à partir de son texte est une évidence<sup>7</sup>. Le décalage significatif observé ne peut pas s'expliquer uniquement par des erreurs des scribes<sup>8</sup>. De plus, des traits caractéristiques de la massorah magna et de la massorah parva du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> montrent que les deux listes proviennent elles aussi de sources différentes. On peut aller encore plus loin en observant que la massorah magna et la massorah parva reflètent chacune une diversité interne qui montre qu'elles sont elles-mêmes composites. Pour tous ces aspects je ne retiens que quelques exemples.

## 2. La comparaison entre le texte et la massorah

1. La massorah magna de Gn 4,7 signale que Dt 32,4 fait partie des 12 occurrences où l'expression הלוֹא (n'est-ce pas ?) est en écriture pleine. Elle signale ensuite qu'il existe deux alternatives pour cette occurrence, c'est-à-dire que certains manuscrits la contiennent en écriture défective (הלֹא). Or, Le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> s'accorde précisément avec l'alternative mentionnée, puisque son lemme est en écriture défective. Cette massorah magna ne provient donc pas du texte de ce manuscrit.

Dans le même sens, la massorah parva de Gn 39,9 signale que le mot אֶתְּךָ (particule de complément direct ainsi que suffixe de la 2<sup>e</sup> personne féminin : toi) revient 17 fois en écriture pleine et dans la forme féminine. La massorah magna, qui donne la même information, cite les 17 occurrences dont Ez 16,4, alors que dans le

<sup>7</sup> Voir Alexander Sperber, « Problems of the Masora », Hebrew Union College Annual 17, 1943, p. 293-394 ; Innocent Himbaza, « Quelle massore pour quel texte ? », BN 106, 2001, p. 33-40.

<sup>8</sup> Dans l'édition de la BHS, le décalage est souvent signalé par « Mp sub loco » ou « contra textum ». Plusieurs cas de « sub loco » ont été expliqués par Daniel S. Mynatt, *The Sub Loco Notes in the Torah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Biblical Dissertation Series 2, Richlands Hills, TX : Bibal Press, 1994 ; Christopher Dost, *The Sub-Locho Notes in the Former Prophets of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Texts and Studies, Third Series 12, Piscataway, NJ : Gorgias Press, 2016.

texte du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>, l'occurrence de ce verset est défective. La massorah magna ne s'accorde pas non plus avec le texte, parce qu'elle n'est visiblement pas basée sur lui.

Ce genre de divergences s'observe également dans l'utilisation du pronom personnel à la 3<sup>e</sup> personne, singulier, masculin הוּא ou féminin הִיא. Le cas spécial du *qarê perpétuel* הוּא, qu'on trouve uniquement dans la Torah, est également concerné. Il semble en effet que la tradition textuelle de la Torah n'a pas pu harmoniser toutes les lectures consonantiques הוּא ou הִיא pour faire une distinction claire entre le masculin et le féminin. Cela fait que des erreurs se sont glissées dans le texte, si bien qu'on lit הִיא alors qu'on s'attendrait à lire הוּא et vice-versa<sup>9</sup>. La massorah parva se fait plusieurs fois écho de cette situation. Selon la tradition rabbinique, ce point aurait même constitué un des critères pour choisir parmi les manuscrits du temple<sup>10</sup>. La massorah parva de plusieurs passages, comme Gn 14,2 ; Lv 11,39 ; 16,31, rapporte que cette situation concerne onze cas. Or, les observations récentes montrent que le texte du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> en comporte bien davantage<sup>11</sup>. Le nombre varie selon les manuscrits. Il faut donc penser qu'en plus d'erreurs possibles, le texte et la massorah parva suivent deux traditions différentes. En réalité, la massorah parva a transmis l'idée traditionnelle des onze cas sans qu'on puisse toujours les déterminer dans le texte.

**2.** La massorah parva de Dt 32,4 signale que la lettre **צ** est écrite en grande taille. Or, le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> (comme c'est le cas pour le manuscrit M<sup>A</sup>) contient un **צ** de taille normale<sup>12</sup>. Cette indication est

<sup>9</sup> Voir Samuel R. Driver, *The Book of Leviticus*, Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible, Leipzig : J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung ; Baltimore : The Johns Hopkins Press ; London : David Nutt, 1894, p. 25-26 ; Christian David Ginsburg, *The Massorah Translated into English with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, Vol IV of the Entire Work, Vienna : Carl Frome, 1897-1905, ה § 82-84, § 113, p. 291, 294-295.

<sup>10</sup> Voir Shemaryahu Talmon, « The Three Scrolls of the Law that were found in the Temple Court », *Textus* 2, 1962, p. 14-27.

<sup>11</sup> Voir Aron Dotan, Nurit Reich (ed.), *Masora Thesaurus, A Complete Alphabetical Collection of the Masora Notes in the Leningrad Codex*, Tel Aviv University, Accordance Bible Software, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Voir le commentaire de Carmel McCarthy, *אלה הדברים Deuteronomy*, Biblia Hebraica Quinta 5, Stuttgart : Deutsche Bibel Gesellschaft, 2007, p. 30\*.

donc inutile pour le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>. Elle a été notée à partir d'une liste qui suivait une tradition scribale différente. En revanche, cette note est utile pour attirer l'attention sur la particularité de cette lettre à cet endroit, même si sa raison d'être nous échappe aujourd'hui. Cela montre que la massorah parva du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> contient des informations qu'on ne comprendrait qu'en consultant d'autres manuscrits. Il est même intéressant d'observer que les longues listes de la masorah finalis, placées après le texte du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> (folio 465v-466r), citent les passages où des lettres de grande taille sont supposées être notées, alors que le texte en ignore une bonne partie. Cela concerne également les lettres de petites tailles (comme le א de ויקרא « et il appela » en Lv 1,1), également notées dans les listes de la massorah finalis et largement ignorées dans le texte du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>.

Observons encore que la même massorah parva de Dt 32,4 utilise le terme בעל (בעלמא) : « ici uniquement » pour signaler que le cas de la lettre צ de grande taille est unique. Or, la massorah parva recourt ici à la terminologie massorétique babylonienne<sup>13</sup>, alors qu'elle aurait pu utiliser le ש (unique) très courant dans la terminologie tibérienne. Cette massorah a-t-elle donc été enregistrée par le même scribe qui note le même ש plusieurs fois sur le même folio (118v) ? À supposer qu'on donne une réponse positive, cette note venait-elle d'Aharon Ben Moshé Ben Asher de Tibériade ? Avait-elle été interprétée comme n'étant pas l'équivalent du ש tibérien ? Les mêmes questions se posent pour d'autres termes babyloniens utilisés dans le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>. Par exemple, dans les Nebiim et les Ketubim, la massorah parva utilise parfois la terminologie babylonienne שלם « écriture pleine », qui est l'équivalent du מל tibérien (Jos 22,14 ; 1S 10,7 ; 2R 25,14 ; Jr 14,2 ; 21,13 ; Jb 1,3 ; Qo 3,9 ; 1Chr 17,17).

<sup>13</sup> Aron Dotan, « Masorah », in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Volume 16 : Ur-Z, Supplementary Entries, Jerusalem ; Keter Publishing House, 1971, col. 1401-1482, spécialement col. 1423.

### 3. La comparaison entre la massorah magna et la massora parva

1. Les grammaires hébraïques nous ont habitués à écrire le nombre quinze (15) en utilisant les lettres *têt-waw* : טו = 9+6, de la même manière que le nombre seize (16) est écrit avec *têt-zayin* (טז = 9+7). Cependant dans la massorah, les choses se présentent différemment. La massorah magna note systématiquement le nombre quinze (15) en utilisant *hê-yôd* : ה״י (= 5+10). Rappelons que la manière d'écrire ce nombre est importante parce qu'elle est idéologique. En effet, ici les lettres י et ה sont volontairement interverties alors que d'habitude les dizaines précèdent les unités. Dans le cas précis de ces lettres, il s'agit d'éviter que ce nombre soit confondu avec le nom de YHWH (יהוה pour יהוה). Le choix d'utiliser *têt-waw* : טו procède de la même logique. En revanche, dans la massorah parva, on trouve les deux formes d'écriture du nombre quinze, parfois *hê-yôd* : ה״י et parfois *yôd-hê* : י״ה. Pour cette dernière graphie, on peut citer plusieurs cas, comme Ex 23,27 ; Dt 28,13 ; Jos 10,20 ; 12,6 ; 1R 13,13 ; Ps 47,9.10 ; Esd 3,1. La numérotation des *Sedarim* qu'on trouve dans les *Nebiim* et les *Ketubim* suit la même graphie<sup>14</sup>. Il est même surprenant d'observer qu'en Lv 24,23 ; Jos 12,6 et Esd 3,1, où l'expression וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (et les fils d'Israël) contient une note de la massorah parva et de la massorah magna, la première signale le nombre quinze comme י״ה alors que la deuxième inverse les lettres et écrit ה״י. Dans de tels cas, il est difficile d'imaginer un seul et même scribe qui en même temps maîtrise ses notes. Ce n'est visiblement pas un scribe qui a décidé d'être méticuleux dans une sorte de notes (massorah magna) et non dans une autre (massorah parva). Il semble plus judicieux de penser que s'il s'agissait d'un seul scribe, il se serait alors basé au moins sur des documents qui contenaient ce type de différences. La source de la massorah parva, que nous connaissons dans le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>, ne se sentait pas obligée d'éviter la forme *yôd-hê* :

<sup>14</sup> Dans les *Nebiim*, la numérotation des *Sedarim* est visiblement d'une main tardive. Dans les *Ketubim*, elle s'ajoute à une autre numérotation originale mais partielle, si bien que parfois un même Seder est numéroté deux fois. Voir par exemple le folio 349v où le numéro 15 (י״ה) du Seder, qui commence en 2Chr 9,24, est noté deux fois.

יָהּ. Il semble dès lors que l'aspect idéologique de l'ordre de ces lettres n'avait pas autant de poids pour la source de la massorah parva que pour celle de la massorah magna. La différence d'idéologie atteste des origines différentes de ces notes. Ce genre de différence pose également la question de savoir si toutes les annotations massorétiques du M<sup>L</sup> ont réellement été notées par le même scribe, malgré les affirmations répétées des colophons. Pour cette question, une réponse négative me semble préférable.

Pour le nombre quinze, l'édition de la BHS note systématiquement *hê-yôd* : יָהּ en conformité avec la massorah magna du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>. C'est-à-dire que Gérard Weil, qui a noté la massorah dans cette édition, a corrigé les occurrences de יָהּ en הֵי. En revanche, l'édition de la BHQ suit telle quelle la massorah parva du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> en utilisant les deux manières de noter le nombre quinze. La massorah écrit également le nombre 16 avec *yôd-waw* : י"ו = 10+6 et non *têt-zayin* : טז, comme les grammaires hébraïques le proposent. Voir par exemple la massorah magna et la massorah parva du lemme שלוש (trois), en Ez 40,21.

2. Le deuxième exemple, plus subtil que le premier, touche deux manières différentes de présenter la même information. L'infinitif absolu du verbe אָשַׁם (être coupable) revient deux fois dans la Bible hébraïque, une fois dans une écriture défective (אָשַׁם : Lv 5,19) et une fois dans une écriture pleine (אָשַׁם : Ez 25,12). La massorah parva de Lv 5,9 note ב' חד חס' וחד מל' « deux fois, une fois en écriture défective et une fois en écriture pleine ». On observe ici que cette annotation massorétique commence par identifier la forme défective de Lv 5,19 avant d'évoquer une forme différente d'écriture qui se trouve ailleurs. Or, la massorah magna du même passage note : אָשַׁם ב' חד מל' וחד חס' « être coupable : deux fois, une fois en écriture pleine et une fois en écriture défective ». Si fondamentalement les deux notes disent la même chose, on ne manque pas d'observer que la massorah magna de Lv 5,19 note le lemme en écriture pleine, alors que ce n'est pas la forme d'écriture de ce passage. De plus, elle commence par signaler l'existence de l'écriture pleine avant l'écriture défective. La présentation de la massorah magna correspond donc mieux au passage d'Ez 25,21 qu'à celui de Lv 5,19. En effet, logiquement, on



présente en premier soit la première occurrence du lemme, soit l'occurrence qu'on a devant les yeux. Dans les deux cas, la massorah magna de Lv 5,19 aurait dû non seulement noter la forme déficiente du lemme, mais encore commencer par signaler que l'une des deux occurrences est déficiente, comme le fait bien la massorah parva. On peut donc légitimement penser qu'ici, le scribe de la massorah magna a repris en Lv 5,19 l'annotation d'Ez 25,12 sans trop réfléchir ni consulter la massorah parva<sup>15</sup>.

Ce genre d'observations plaide d'une part en faveur de sources massorétiques différentes et, d'autre part, en faveur de plusieurs scribes.

Les scribes de la massorah dans le manuscrit M<sup>l</sup> ont utilisé de nombreuses sources spécialement à partir de la troisième partie de la Bible hébraïque : les Ketubim<sup>16</sup>. En effet, ils citent de temps en temps les noms des massorètes dont ils ont consulté les documents. Nous avons des exemples dans la massorah magna de Pr 20,11 et de Jb 32,3 où le scribe évoque le célèbre Rabbi Pinhas, président d'une Yeshiva (académie talmudique) vers le milieu du 9<sup>e</sup> s. après J.-C. Dans d'autres passages des Ketubim, le scribe cite les traditions de Ben Asher, Ben Naftali, les Hommes de Tibériade, les Maîtres de Tibériade (qui sont apparemment différents des précédents) ainsi que les fameux codices *Hilleli*<sup>17</sup>, *Mugah* ou encore

<sup>15</sup> Il arrive cependant que le scribe montre bien qu'en recopiant une note, il a tenu compte du lemme qu'elle accompagne. Par exemple, en Lev 12,6, la massorah 1,5) et une écriture déficiente (Lv 12,6), mais elle précise que c'est la première occurrence qui est déficiente (קדמי חס). Le scribe de la première liste massorétique ou celui de cette massorah dans le manuscrit M<sup>l</sup>, était donc ici conscient de l'état textuel du lemme qu'il avait devant les yeux.

<sup>16</sup> Voir également sur ce point Aron Dotan, « Masoretic Rubrics of Indicated Origin in Codex Leningrad (B19a) », in Ernest J. Revell (ed), *VIII International Congress of the International Organization for Masoretic Studies*, Chicago 1988, Masoretic Studies 6, Atlanta, GA : Society of Biblical Studies, 1990, p. 37-44, spécialement p. 39 ; Aron Dotan, Nurit Reich (ed.), *Masora Thesaurus, A Complete Alphabetical Collection of the Masora Notes in the Leningrad Codex*, Tel Aviv University, Accordance Bible Software, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Écrit autour de 600 ap. J.-C. par Rabbi Hillel Ben Moshé Ben Hillel, ce manuscrit aurait survécu dans une copie faite à Toledo (Espagne) au 13<sup>e</sup> s. ap. J.-C et qui porte le même nom. Voir Nahum M. Sarna (ed.), *The Pentateuch. Early Spanish*

le *Maḥzor* ou *Maḥzorah Rabba* (le grand manuscrit)<sup>18</sup>. Toutes ces sources, qui contiennent quelques différences aussi bien sur le plan textuel que sur celui de la ponctuation, ont contribué à façonner le visage complexe actuel du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>.

#### **4. La comparaison entre la massorah magna et la massorah parva, d'une part, et les longues listes de la massorah finalis, d'autre part**

Le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> contient de longues listes massorétiques à la fin de chaque corpus (Torah, Nebiim et Ketubim). Plusieurs éléments font penser que ces longues listes proviennent de sources différentes et probablement tardives par rapport au reste de la massorah. Ces listes sont principalement en hébreu, alors que la majeure partie de la massorah magna et de la massorah parva est en araméen. Cependant, il y a plus.

Dans ces longues listes, les noms des livres de la Torah correspondent à ce que nous avons l'habitude de voir dans les grammaires, alors que la massorah magna et la massorah parva leur donnent parfois un nom différent. Par exemple, dans la massorah magna et dans la massorah parva, le Lévitique est quelquefois appelé תורת כהנים « la Torah des prêtres » en plus de son nom courant ויקרא « et il appela ». En revanche, le livre des Nombres est toujours nommé וידבר « et il parla » et non le terme courant במדבר « dans le désert ». Quant au Deutéronome, il est appelé משנה תורה « répétition de Torah » ou אלה הדברים « voici les paroles », mais pas le nom habituel דברים « les paroles ». Inversement, ces longues listes donnent différents noms à d'autres livres. Le nom des Douze prophètes est parfois תרי עשר « douze » (en araméen) et parfois שנים עשר « douze » (en hébreu), les Psaumes sont appelés תהלות et תהלים. Le livre des Lamentations est appelé קינות « lamentations » et non איכה « comment ? ».

*Manuscript (Codex Hillely) from the Collection of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, Jerusalem : Makor Publishing Ltd, 1974.*

<sup>18</sup> Voir par exemple la massorah magna de 1Chr 2,5 ; Ps 45,5 ; 124,1-2 ; Pr 3,12 ; Qo 7,23 ; Lam 2,18 ; Dn 4,27 ; etc.

Comme signalé ci-dessus, les longues listes massorétiques à la fin du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> signalent les endroits où l'on trouve des lettres de grande ou de petite taille. Le texte du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> ignore une grande partie de ces lettres, puisqu'il ne contient que 3 lettres de petite taille sur 38 signalées par les listes de la massorah finalis. La massorah parva ne signale également que les trois lettres reflétées par le texte. En revanche, en ce qui concerne les lettres de grande taille, non seulement la massorah parva et le texte ne reflètent pas toutes les lettres de la massorah finalis, mais encore ils ne signalent pas les mêmes lettres. Par exemple les lettres de grande taille notées dans le texte de Dt 6,4 (ע et ד) ne sont pas mentionnées par la massorah parva, alors qu'elle signale à son tour quelques lettres de grande taille que le texte ne note pas. Pour ce cas, on peut rappeler la lettre ז de Dt 32,4.

Observons encore que la liste des lettres de grande taille que nous avons dans la massorah finalis (folio 465v) précise que la lettre ז de grande taille ne figure qu'une seule fois dans toute la Bible hébraïque et qu'elle se trouve en Es 56,10 (צפיו עורים כלם) ! Ce cas montre donc clairement que l'écriture du texte biblique, la massorah parva et la massorah finalis suivent au moins trois traditions différentes.

On doit donc constater que les longues listes de la massorah finalis ont été introduites dans le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>, mais qu'elles provenaient d'autres sources. Le contenu de la massorah finalis donne l'impression que les scribes faisaient un travail de conservation du patrimoine massorétique. Il ne s'agit pas d'une sorte d'index qui faciliterait l'entrée dans le texte du manuscrit lui-même.

## 5. La comparaison entre les annotations de la massorah magna

Quelques indices montrent que la massorah magna du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> a été constituée à partir de sources différentes. Cette observation se vérifie notamment lorsque le même lemme comporte deux annotations. Dans ce genre de cas, on peut constater un possible décalage de leur contenu, un décalage qui s'explique mieux

si les deux annotations proviennent de deux sources différentes. Pour ce point, je me limiterai à un seul exemple.

La massorah magna de שבטי בני ישראל (les tribus des enfants d'Israël) en Jos 4,5 comporte deux notes. Elles signalent toutes les deux que ce lemme revient trois fois (dans la Bible hébraïque) et elles indiquent les mêmes références, dans le même ordre : Nb 36,3 ; Jos 4,5 et Jos 4,8. La première note se trouve sur le folio 122v, précédant celui qui comporte le lemme, alors que la deuxième se trouve sur le même folio que le lemme (123r). La différence entre les deux notes se trouve dans les segments de textes (*simanim*) qu'elles utilisent pour déterminer les références des versets cités. En effet, les deux identifient Nb 36,3 par ses premiers mots והיו לאחד (si elles sont à l'un). En revanche, alors que la première massorah magna identifie Jos 4,5 également par ses premiers mots ויאמר להם יהושע (et Josué leur dit), la deuxième utilise le segment למספר (selon le nombre). Pour identifier Jos 4,8, la première massorah magna utilise le segment ויעשו כן בני ישראל (les fils d'Israël firent ainsi) qui se trouve au début du verset. La deuxième massorah magna identifie le même verset par וחבירו (et son compagnon), c'est-à-dire une occurrence similaire et proche de la précédente<sup>19</sup>. Cette dernière indication de référence ne cite donc pas un segment de verset. Ce n'est cependant pas sur cette manière de citer un verset qu'il faut s'arrêter, puisqu'elle est tout à fait usuelle dans la massorah magna.

La présence de ces deux notes de la massorah magna pour le même lemme s'explique par deux sources différentes. On peut penser que la deuxième note a été ajoutée ultérieurement par un scribe qui croyait combler une lacune. Il est également possible qu'un même scribe, ayant au moins deux listes massorétiques devant lui, ait jugé bon de recopier les deux notes qui lui semblaient transmettre différentes informations.

La massorah parva est dans le même cas, comme l'exemple de Jg 20,13 le montre. Les notes du manuscrit M<sup>1</sup> semblent refléter

<sup>19</sup> Gérard Weil ne reflète pas cette problématique puisqu'il signale simplement que les deux occurrences répètent la massorah magna de Nb 36,3. Voir Gérard Weil, *Masorah Gedolah, Iuxta Codicem Leningradensem B 19 a*, Volume I Catalogi, Roma : Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1971, p. 12\*.

trois sources différentes : celle qui signalait un problème par un *nûn* marginal<sup>20</sup>, celle qui a utilisé la note בני ק (le *qarê* est בני) ainsi que celle qui a noté בני קר ולא כת (בני est lu mais pas écrit). Il est intéressant d'observer que les trois notes concernant le même cas sont regroupées au même endroit. C'est comme s'il s'agissait de compiler les notes concernant le même lemme, mais provenant de sources différentes. D'une part, les scribes ont estimé que chaque note isolée ne suffisait pas, et d'autre part, ils se sont abstenus de refondre toutes les notes en une seule.

## 6. La variation de l'orthographe

Une autre illustration de la diversité des sources de la massorah magna et massorah parva du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> est la variation, presque déconcertante, de l'orthographe de certains mots. Israel Yeivin avait déjà fait observer que la diversité des sources est observable notamment dans l'utilisation de termes synonymes de l'hébreu et de l'araméen ou dans différentes manières de dire la même chose<sup>21</sup>. Limitons-nous précisément au terme « mot », tel qu'il est noté au singulier. Ce cas ne concerne pas les différentes manières d'abréger un terme donné, puisqu'on peut tout à fait les attribuer à une seule personne. Ici, j'observe plutôt différentes manières d'orthographier le même terme au complet. La massora magna et la massorah parva contiennent les orthographes hébraïques et araméennes suivantes : מילה, מלא, מלה et מלתה. Il est difficile d'imaginer qu'une seule et même personne ait voulu à ce point varier les orthographes de ce même terme. Il semble judicieux de penser qu'à l'origine, ces orthographes ont été notées par différentes personnes et qu'elles furent ensuite introduites dans la massorah du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>. Il me semble même préférable de penser qu'au moins certaines d'entre elles ont été introduites dans le même manuscrit par différentes personnes.

<sup>20</sup> Voir Innocent Himbaza, « Le *nûn* marginal et la petite massore », *Textus* 20, 2000, p. 173-191 ; Elvira Martín-Contreras, « The Marginal *Nûn* in the Masora of the Cairo Codex of the Prophets: Use and Function », *Vetus Testamentum* 65, 2015, p. 81-90.

<sup>21</sup> Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, § 137, p. 124.

## 7. Conclusion

Dans ces quelques lignes, j'ai essayé de montrer que l'observation simultanée des données textuelles et massorétiques du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> plaide en faveur de plusieurs sources issues de milieux différents et d'annotations probablement introduites par plusieurs personnes. On ne saurait donc suivre aveuglement les affirmations d'un colophon qui affirme que le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> a été écrit, ponctué et muni de la massorah par Shemuel Ben Ya'akov, sur la base des livres corrigés et clairs écrits par Aharon Ben Moshé Ben Asher.

La massorah du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> provient de plusieurs sources, et nous ne savons pas jusqu'à quel point les scribes ont opéré des choix parmi toutes les sources qu'ils avaient à leur disposition. Nous ne sommes en tout cas pas en face d'une massorah basée sur le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup>, comme le pensait au départ Paul Kahle, lorsque ce manuscrit fut choisi pour servir de base à la troisième édition de la Biblia hebraica de Kittel. Cette situation sert et dessert le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> en même temps. D'un côté, elle le dessert dans la mesure où les annotations de la massorah ne correspondent pas à 100 % au texte du manuscrit.

De l'autre côté cependant, la diversité de la massorah du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> le sert, dans la mesure où il devient une source d'information pour les générations d'aujourd'hui. Cette diversité montre finalement que ces sources massorétiques étaient proches les unes des autres au niveau de leur contenu. Les scribes pouvaient faire accompagner un texte d'une massorah provenant d'une source différente. Finalement, l'écart qui existe entre le texte et les diverses données de la massorah est relativement réduit, si l'on tient compte du fait que les massores du manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> n'ont pas été composées à partir de son texte. On se serait attendu à un écart plus important. De ce point de vue, ce manuscrit constitue comme un microcosme de l'état textuel et massorétique de son époque.

Malgré ses propres péripéties, le manuscrit M<sup>L</sup> est dans une position privilégiée, puisqu'il combine les meilleurs atouts du moment. C'est le manuscrit hébreu complet le plus ancien lié à la tradition des Ben Asher de Tibériade.

# Arabes et Judéo-chrétiens : à propos de Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm et de Jean le Baptiste

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**Abstract.** A new look at the epigraphic sources on the Arabic god Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm leads to a comparison with the prophet John the Baptist. The two figures exhibit similar features, like charism, benevolence and asceticism; the cult of the Arabic god is documented from about the mid-first century to the mid-third century, in Transjordan and South Syria. This cult was especially revered by Safaitic soldiers enrolled in armies, both national and Roman.

## Introduction

Les contacts entre Juifs, Nabatéens et Arabes en Transjordanie et dans le Ḥawrān ont été plusieurs fois commentés et étudiés<sup>1</sup>. On

<sup>1</sup> Sur les rapports entre Nabatéens, Arabes et Juifs dans le Ḥawrān, voir en particulier les études suivantes : Michael C.A. Macdonald, « Nomads and the Hawrān in the Late Hellenistic and Roman Periods: a Reassessment of the Epigraphic Evidence », *Syria* 70/3-4, 1993, p. 303-403 ; Maurice Sartre, *Bostra. Des origines à l'Islam*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique CXVII, Paris, Geuthner, 1985 ; Laurent Tholbecq, « Hérodiens, Nabatéens et Lagides dans le Ḥawrān au I<sup>er</sup> s. av. J.-C. : Réflexions autour du sanctuaire de Ba'alšamīn de Sī<sup>c</sup> (Syrie du Sud) », *Topoi* 15/1, 2007, p. 293-310 ; sur les contacts culturels et politiques entre la Judée et la Nabatène, voir M.-J. Roche, « Jérusalem et Pétra entre histoire et archéologie. Les monuments funéraires », in *Jérusalem antique et médiévale. Mélanges en l'honneur de E.-M. Laperrousaz*, Coll. Revue des études juives, André Lemaire et Caroline Arnould-Béhar (éds), Paris-Louvain-Walpole, Peeters, 2011, p. 131-154, fig. 1-4, ph. 1-6 ; Id., « Une intaille du British Museum au nom de š'dt », in *Entre Carthage et l'Arabie heureuse. Mélanges offerts à François Bron*, Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet, Catherine Fauveau et Iwona Gajda (éds), Orient et Méditerranée 12, Paris, de Boccard, 2013, p. 301-314, fig. 1-2 ; Id., « Relations d'hospitalité entre dynastes nabatéens et judéens », *Semitica et Classica* IX, 2016, p. 103-118, fig. 1-2.

propose ici un rapprochement entre deux figures, l'une humaine, le prophète juif Jean Baptiste, l'autre divine, le dieu arabe Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm, qui présentent entre eux des similitudes frappantes.

Le dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm est connu par trois inscriptions nabatéennes dont une fragmentaire et un graffite, une inscription et une tessère palmyréniennes, et plusieurs inscriptions safaitiques<sup>2</sup> ; ces dernières sont de loin les plus nombreuses, et apparaissent régulièrement au fil des publications. C'est donc un corpus relativement restreint qui concerne le dieu, dont l'origine arabe est bien attestée par son onomastique ; cependant, la forme du nom, Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm, que l'on peut traduire par « le compagnon de la tribu » (*infra*), est sans parallèle avec les autres théonymes nabatéens, palmyréniens ou safaitiques. La répartition limitée dans le temps et dans l'espace des inscriptions le mentionnant soulève aussi diverses questions. Une *interpretatio graeca* du dieu arabe Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm a été proposée comme étant celle du héros Lycurgue, l'adversaire de Dionysos.

Ces divers aspects du dieu posent donc la question de ses origines, et plusieurs chercheurs ont proposé des interprétations différentes. L'intuition de Charles Clermont-Ganneau concernant l'origine prophétique — Moïse en l'occurrence — derrière la figure divine de Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm représente la piste la plus féconde<sup>3</sup> ; mais si Moïse a été récupéré par la tradition populaire dans la région de Pétra, ce dernier site est trop éloigné du domaine de parcours des Arabes safaitiques, dans le Ḥawrān et le Ḥarra, en Syrie du Sud et en Jordanie du Nord-Est, pour que l'on puisse raisonnablement l'y relier.

On propose donc de rapprocher plutôt la figure de Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm de celle d'un autre prophète, historiquement attesté au début du 1<sup>er</sup> siècle de notre ère, en l'occurrence Jean le Baptiste, dont les témoignages sont rapportés d'une part par le *Nouveau Testament*, dans les Évangiles synoptiques de Luc, Marc et Mat-

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John F. Healey, *The Religion of the Nabataeans: A Conspectus*, Leyde/Boston, Brill, 2001, p. 143-147.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Clermont-Ganneau, « Le dieu nabatéen Chai<sup>c</sup> al-Qaum », *Recueil d'archéologie orientale* IV, Paris, 1901, p. 392-393.



thieu<sup>4</sup>, et d'autre part par une notice dans les *Antiquités juives* de Flavius Josèphe<sup>5</sup> : ils présentent avec ce que nous savons du dieu arabe, grâce aux informations glanées dans les sources épigraphiques, des parentés certaines.

C'est au travers des inscriptions trouvées en Nabatène, dans le Hawrân et à Palmyre que l'on va tout d'abord tenter de cerner la personnalité du dieu, avant de la confronter aux informations fournies par les Évangiles et par Flavius Josèphe sur le prophète Jean le Baptiste. On complètera cette documentation d'époque romaine par des mentions tirées des sources islamiques sur le prophète Jean, *Le Coran*<sup>6</sup> et la *Chronique* de Tabari<sup>7</sup>, qui apportent des éclairages différents de celui des Évangiles. En particulier, les deux aspects principaux de la figure de Jean dans la tradition chrétienne, son rôle de Baptiste d'une part, et sa mort en martyr d'autre part, sont absents des sources islamiques.

## Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm dans les inscriptions nabatéennes

### Le nom du dieu dans une courte dédicace

À Hégra, à l'extrémité méridionale du royaume nabatéen, un court graffite, très abîmé, avait été trouvé par Charles Doughty, mais non transcrit<sup>8</sup> ; il est situé à l'est du site de Hégra/Madā'in Ṣāliḥ, dans le massif du Jabal Ithlib ; c'est un vaste sanctuaire rupestre, avec de nombreuses niches cultuelles et des inscriptions ;

<sup>4</sup> *Synopse des quatre Évangiles en français, avec parallèles des Apocryphes et des Pères*, T. I, Textes, P. Benoit & M.-E. Boismard, Paris, Cerf, 1972 (2<sup>e</sup> éd.), p. 3, 13-17, 37, 63, 77, 95, 128-129.

<sup>5</sup> Flavius Josèphe, *Antiquités Juives* XVIII, 116-118.

<sup>6</sup> Sour. III, La famille de 'Imran, verset 39.

<sup>7</sup> Mohammed Ibn Jarir Al-Tabari, *Chronique de Tabari. Histoire des prophètes et des rois, de la création à la dernière Révélation*, trad. Hermann Zotenberg, La Ruche, Paris, 2006, p. 250 : « l'ère préislamique ».

<sup>8</sup> CIS II, 263, pl. XL (d'après Ch. Doughty, non transcrit) ; Antonin Jaussen et Raphaël Savignac, *Mission archéologique en Arabie. I. De Jérusalem au Hedjaz. Médain-Saleh*, Publications de la Société des fouilles archéologiques 2, Paris, Geuthner, 1909, p. 221, n° 72, p. 221, fig. 204, p. 414, Pl. XXVI.

près de l'entrée, en face d'une salle à banquet monumentale creusée dans le massif de grès, appelée le Diwan, et à gauche d'une niche cultuelle vide ornée d'un fronton garni de trois petites urnes, est gravé ce graffiti. Les Pères Antonin Jaussen et Raphaël Savignac l'ont retrouvé et ils ont déchiffré quelques lettres en partie effacées. Par la suite, Joseph Milik et Jean Starcky ont entièrement déchiffré le graffiti et en ont publié un nouveau fac-similé<sup>9</sup> :



Fig. 1. Graffiti de Hégra (ARNA nab 101).

šy<sup>ʿ</sup>lqwm ʾlhʾ

Shay<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Qawm le dieu

La localisation du graffiti a récemment été précisée par Laila Nehmé, près d'une niche vide, Ith4<sup>10</sup>, mais il n'est pas nécessaire de supposer la présence d'un bétyle portatif dans cette niche vide, qui est un lieu de culte en elle-même<sup>11</sup>. La datation de ce graffiti n'est pas aisée, mais il ne peut avoir été gravé avant le début des inscriptions nabatéennes à Hégra, en l'an 1 avant notre ère ; il pourrait dater de la fin du règne d'Arétas IV (9 avant notre ère –

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Joseph T. Milik & Jean Starcky, « Inscriptions nabatéennes », in F.V. Winnett et W.R. Reed, *Ancient Records from North Arabia*, Toronto, 1970, n° 101, p. 156, et pl. 30, p. 234 (nouveau fac-similé) : « lecture désormais certaine ».

<sup>10</sup> Laïla Nehmé, « Towards an Understanding of the Urban Space of Madāʾin Šālīḥ, Ancient Ḥegrā, through Epigraphic Evidence », *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, vol. 35, 2005, p. 158 : « Above Ith4, there is a Nabataean inscription, JSNab 72, which can be read sy<sup>ʿ</sup>lqwm ʾlhʾ, that is 'Shay<sup>ʿ</sup> al qawm the go{d}', (Fig. 5), and it is very probable that Ith4 was used to display the betyl of Shay<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Qawm. However, Ith4 is not mentioned in Jaussen and Savignac's description of Jabal Ithlib (1909-1922, i: 126-129, 404-441) ».

<sup>11</sup> Sur l'utilisation des niches à bétyles, cf. mon ouvrage à paraître, *Les bétyles de Pétra. Niches cultuelles, monuments apparentés et inscriptions*, Geuthner, Paris.

39/40 de notre ère), à l'époque de la plus grande activité du site, ou vers le milieu du I<sup>er</sup> siècle de notre ère, à l'époque de Malichos II (39/40-70/71), car sa paléographie n'est pas tardive et s'accorde avec celle du milieu du siècle. Il peut être l'œuvre d'un soldat d'origine safaitique, enrôlé dans l'armée nabatéenne, dans ce site qui est une colonie militaire, placée à l'extrémité méridionale du royaume.

Ce court graffite donne le nom du dieu selon l'orthographe araméenne ; le théonyme peut se traduire par « Celui qui accompagne le peuple », et se transcrit šy<sup>c</sup>-lqwm, en araméen (nabatéen et palmyrénien) ; son équivalent en safaitique est š<sup>c</sup>-hqwm, selon une orthographe défective<sup>12</sup> :

- šy<sup>c</sup>/š<sup>c</sup> est un verbe d'origine arabe qui signifie « suivre, accompagner »<sup>13</sup>, « aider, assister »<sup>14</sup> ;
- l-/h- est respectivement l'article arabe et nord-arabique ;
- qwm/qm est un nom arabe qui signifie « la troupe, le troupeau, le peuple »<sup>15</sup>.

La signification première du nom est donc « celui qui escorte une troupe » et par extension « celui qui accompagne le peuple », « le guide de la tribu »<sup>16</sup> ; le dieu est donc un pasteur du peuple, image calquée sur celle d'un berger conduisant ou accompagnant son troupeau. C'est donc l'idée de guide protecteur d'un groupe qui est essentielle, une divinité tutélaire mais sans mention du nom

<sup>12</sup> Les semi-voyelles ne sont pas toujours notées en safaitique, et l'orthographe safaitique est généralement défective ; l'article nord-arabique est h- au lieu de l'article arabe l- ; sur le safaitique, cf. Ahmad Al-Jallad, *An Outline of the Grammar of the Safaitic Inscriptions*, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 80, Leyde/Boston, Brill, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of modern written Arabic (Arabic - English)*, edited by J. Milton Cowan, 4th edition considerably enlarged and amended by the author, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1979, p. 581 ; « to escort, accompany ; to follow ; to side » ; le terme shī'isme vient de la même racine, *ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, « to side with someone, to take side for » ; Clermont-Ganneau, *op. cit.*, p. 390-391.

<sup>15</sup> H. Wehr, *op. cit.*, p. 935, *qawm* : « crowd or group of people ; tribe, nation ».

<sup>16</sup> Walter W. Müller, « Some Remarks on the Safaitic Inscriptions », *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 10, 1979, p. 68.

du peuple ou de la tribu, comme c'est le cas pour les noms divins formés sur *gd*, Gad (divinité protectrice) suivi du nom d'une tribu en safaitique. Ce sont cependant les théonymes formés sur Gad qui présentent le plus de similitude avec celui du dieu Shay' al-Qawm<sup>17</sup> ; la différence étant que le culte de cette dernière divinité n'est pas restreint en théorie à un groupe particulier, bien que dans les inscriptions ses fidèles soient souvent des soldats.

En effet, selon les auteurs de *Quellen*, derrière le mot *qwm* se trouve l'idée d'un groupe de soldats ou de caravaniers<sup>18</sup> ; c'est en effet l'interprétation qui ressort des inscriptions, mais cependant le sens original de *qwm*, « troupeau, troupe », est indéterminé.

### Deux inscriptions du Ḥawrān mentionnant Shay' al-Qawm

À l'autre extrémité du royaume nabatéen, dans le Ḥawrān, le nom de Shay' al-Qawm est mentionné dans deux inscriptions. Les inscriptions nabatéennes du Ḥawrān appartiennent majoritairement, d'après les datations que l'on possède, à la seconde moitié du I<sup>er</sup> siècle de notre ère et au début du II<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>19</sup>.

Sur le linteau d'une maison à Ṣabḥah, au sud de Buṣrā, une courte inscription en partie effacée a été trouvée (RES 474, 2030)<sup>20</sup> :

<sup>17</sup> Selon le schéma : *gd* + nom de lignage/šy' + *qwm*.

<sup>18</sup> Ursula Hackl, Hanna Jenni, et Christoph Schneider, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Nabatäer. Textsammlung mit Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus 51, Fribourg/Göttingen, Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003, p. 83 ; des deux inscriptions citées, la première (B.001.02) provient de Palmyre, la seconde (F.031.01) de Tell al-Ghariya (*infra*).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. mon ouvrage à paraître, « Inscriptions nabatéennes datées », Louvain, Peeters.

<sup>20</sup> Enno Littmann, « Nabataean Inscriptions from the Southern Hauran », in *Semitic Inscriptions, section A. Nabataean Inscriptions*, Publication of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1904-1905 and 1909, Part IV, Leyde, 1914, n° 18, p. 17-18.

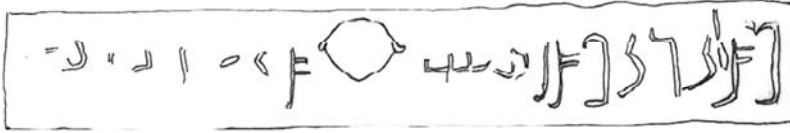


Fig. 2. Inscription de Ṣabḥah (Littmann 1914, n° 18).

La transcription et la traduction sont restituées ainsi par Enno Littmann :

pš[yl] dy pšl mlkw [l]šy[<sup>c</sup>lqwm 'lhy']

Sculp[ture] qu'a faite le sculpteur Malkū [pour] Shay[<sup>c</sup> al-Qawn le dieu].

Malgré l'état défectueux de la pierre, la restitution du nom semble assurée ; l'anthroponyme *mlkw*, Malkū, est attesté en nabatéen<sup>21</sup>. Une tête était sculptée au centre, peut-être casquée avec la trace des couvre-joues sur les côtés (cf. *infra*).

Une autre inscription nabatéenne mentionnant le dieu a été trouvée à Tell al-Ghāriya, au sud-est de Buṣrā, en territoire nabatéen, datant de l'époque royale. C'est une dédicace mentionnant une construction (<sup>c</sup>*rkt*) « au dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm en l'an vingt-six de Rabbēl », donc en 95/6 de notre ère<sup>22</sup>. L'inscription est gravée sur le petit côté de deux longues dalles en basalte ; c'est le fragment d'un édifice religieux.

<sup>21</sup> Voir Abraham Negev, *Personal Names in the Nabataean Realm*, Qedem 32, Jérusalem, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1991, n° 644.

<sup>22</sup> Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique, (RES), AIBL, Paris, II 1907-1914, III 1916-1918, 86 et 471 ; René Dussaud & Frédéric Macler, *Voyage archéologique au Ṣafā et dans le Djebel ed-Drūz*, Paris, 1901, n° 62a et 62b, fac-similé p. 187 (copie grav.) ; Clermont-Ganneau, *op. cit.*, p. 382-402 ; René Dussaud & Frédéric Macler, *Mission dans les régions désertiques de la Syrie moyenne*, Paris, 1903, n° 8, p. 309 sqq. (fac-similé p. 31) ; Jean Cantineau, *Le nabatéen*, II, *Choix de textes - Lexique*, Paris, 1932, II.ix, p. 20-21 ; Healey, *op. cit.*, p. 144 ; Hackl & al., *op. cit.*, F.031.01, p. 193-195.

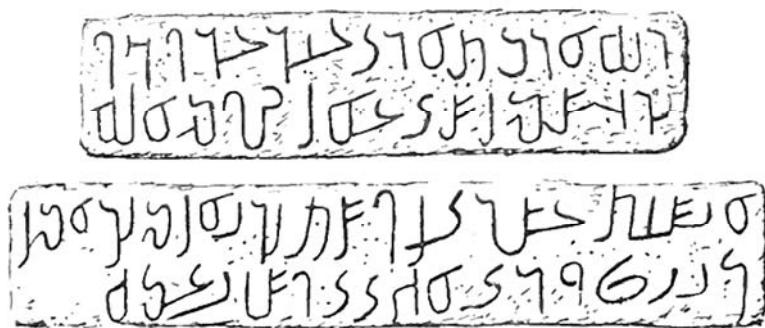


Fig. 3. Inscription de Tell al-Ghāriya (Mission, 8).

La transcription et la traduction de René Dussaud sont les suivantes :

- 1) *dnh 'rkt' dy 'bd 'rwdw*
- 2) *br gšm lšy<sup>o</sup>lqwm 'lh*
- 3) *'bšnt 'šryn wšt lrb'l mlk' ml-*
- 4) *-k nbṭw dy 'hyy wšzb 'mh*
- 1) Ceci est l'édicule (?) qu'a fait 'Arwadū
- 2) fils de Gašam à Šay'al-Qawm le di-
- 3) -eu en l'an vingt-six de Rabbel le le roi, ro-
- 4) -i des Nabatéens qui a fait vivre et a sauvé son peuple.

La formule de datation est typique des inscriptions présentant un caractère officiel.

Le terme *'rkt'* (singulier emphatique) vient probablement du latin *arca*, et est traduit habituellement par « portique », un élément du mur d'enceinte<sup>23</sup> ; les offrandes ne concernent générale-

<sup>23</sup> Jakob Hoftijzer et Karel Jongeling, *Dictionary of North-West Semitic Inscriptions. With Appendices by R.C. Steiner, A. Mosak Moshavi and B. Porten*, Leiden/NewYork/Köln, 2005, p. 109 : *'rkh* ; Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 67, hésite à traduire *'rkt'* par « portique », mais « sarcophage » est à exclure car l'inscription n'est pas funéraire ; en revanche, le mot latin *arca* désigne un coffre, une cellule, et pourrait se traduire par « édicule » ; Hackl & al., *op. cit.*, p. 194, rapprochent le mot *'rkh* de l'arabe *'arikah*, « Ruhebett/Sofa » ; cf. aussi Joseph T. Milik, *Dédicaces faites par des dieux (Palmyre, Hatra, Tyr) et des thiasés sémitiques à l'époque romaine, Recherches d'épigraphie proche-orientale I*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique XCII, Paris, Geuthner, 1972, p. 227.

ment que des éléments architecturaux ou des objets, autels votifs, stèles, dalles inscrites, et non des bâtiments complets ; en effet, ici le verbe utilisé est *ʿbd* (a fait), et non *bnh* (a construit) ; ce bâtiment, édicule ou même simple portique, montre l'importance accordée au dieu ; le portique est aussi un lieu de rassemblement.

L'onomastique est arabe : l'anthroponyme *ʿrwdw*, *ʿArwadū* est bien attesté en safaitique<sup>24</sup>, tout comme le patronyme *gšm*, *Gašam*<sup>25</sup>.

### Les anthroponymes théophores formés sur Shay<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Qawm

Le dieu est aussi attesté dans des anthroponymes théophores nabatéens, utilisant l'une ou l'autre partie du nom, un phénomène bien attesté pour les théonymes composés<sup>26</sup> ; John Healey, qui a donné une liste des anthroponymes théophores formés sur le nom du dieu, estime que « none of these is a normal theophoric name »<sup>27</sup>, ce qui nous renvoie à la forme inhabituelle du nom du dieu.

Avec la première partie du nom, on trouve les formes suivantes :

- *ʿbdšy*<sup>ʿ</sup>, *ʿAbdShay<sup>ʿ</sup>* (CIS II, 904 ?), trouvé au Sināi : « serviteur de Shay<sup>ʿ</sup> » ;
- *šʿl*, *Shay<sup>ʿ</sup>-el* (RES 2041) : « Shay<sup>ʿ</sup> est dieu » ; cet anthroponyme théophore est attesté dans une courte dédicace bilingue provenant de Is-Summāqīyāt dans le Ḥawrān ; la forme

<sup>24</sup> Gerald L. Harding *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions*, U. Toronto Press, 1971, p. 415 ; *ʿrd*, quatre exemples en safaitique et un en thamoudique ; Fred V. Winnett & Gerald Lankester Harding, *Inscriptions from Fifty Safaitic Cairns*, Toronto, 1978, U. Toronto Press, p. 594.

<sup>25</sup> Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 162 : 22 exemples en safaitique ; Winnett & Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 565 : 8 exemples ; il apparaît sporadiquement en nabatéen, cf. Negev, *op. cit.*, n° 259 : *gšmw*.

<sup>26</sup> Par exemple, à partir du nom divin féminin *ʿtrʿth*, (Atargatis), on trouve *brʿth*, « Fils de (ʿAttar)ʿteh », cf. Milik, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>27</sup> Healey, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

nabatéenne est šy<sup>ʿ</sup>l, que l'on trouve transcrite en grec Σαιηλός<sup>28</sup>, et elle est également attestée en safaitique, s<sup>ʿ</sup>l<sup>29</sup>.

- š<sup>ʿ</sup>lhy, Shayʿallahī ; cet anthroponyme théophore est attesté dans une inscription nabatéenne de Pétra, RES 1421<sup>30</sup>.

Le nom apparaît aussi dans un graffiti inédit provenant du sud de Pétra, et dont l'auteur porte un nom typiquement nord-arabique. En effet, sur les pentes du sommet du Jabal Nabī Ḥarun, des inscriptions nabatéennes ont été gravées au sol par des pèlerins ; elles sont entremêlées de dessins de pieds ou plus exactement de sandales ; l'une d'elles, inédite, émane d'un personnage d'origine safaitique, dont le patronyme théophore est formé sur la première partie du nom du dieu Shayʿ al-Qawm :



Fig. 4. Graffiti du Wādī Abū ʿUllayqa (ph. M.-J. Roche).

L'inscription se lit ainsi<sup>31</sup> :

<sup>28</sup> RES 2041.

<sup>29</sup> Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 349 ; Rafat Hazim, « Die safaitischen theophoren Namen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung », Uni.-Diss. Görlich/Weiershäuser, Marburg/Lahn, 1986, p. 66-67.

<sup>30</sup> RES 1421 ; Gustav Dalman, *Neue Petra-Forschungen und die heilige Felsen von Jerusalem*, Leipzig, 1912, p. 91-92, n° 68.

<sup>31</sup> L'inscription porte le n° MP 1040 [catalogue des archives de J. T. Milik] (étude en cours).



*bnlt br šy<sup>c</sup>lhy*

Ben-Allāt fils de Shay<sup>c</sup>alahy

L'anthroponyme *bnlt*, Ben-Allāt, est nord-arabique et en l'occurrence safaitique ; en effet, j'ai distingué un *nûn* plutôt qu'un *resh* après le *bêt*, alors que le patronyme est introduit par l'araméen *br-* et non par le nord-arabique *bn-*.

Sur la deuxième partie du nom du dieu, (al-)qwm<sup>32</sup>, sont attestés les anthroponymes théophores suivants, formés sur *zyd*, « augmenter, accroître »<sup>33</sup>:

- *zydqwmw* : cet anthroponyme théophore est aussi gravé dans le même sanctuaire rupestre du Wādī Abū 'Ullayqa<sup>34</sup> ; son fils porte un nom largement attesté en nabatéen comme en safaitique, *hn<sup>w</sup>*<sup>35</sup> ; cette forme nabatéenne (terminaison en -w) est aussi attestée à Pétra dans trois inscriptions (CIS II, 352, 353, 424)<sup>36</sup>.
- *zydqwm* : cette forme nord-arabique est attestée au Sinaï (CIS II, 1179 (?), 1180)<sup>37</sup>.

On constate donc que, bien que les dédicaces nabatéennes au dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm soient rares, des anthroponymes théophores sont néanmoins attestés dans les inscriptions, de la région de Pétra et du Sinaï, ce qui montre la bonne diffusion de son culte.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Jallad, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

<sup>33</sup> Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 91-92.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> MP 96/869, 96/881 [archives J.T. Milik] ; cf. Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 87 ; nom très bien attesté dans le Ḥawrān et dans le Sinaï, cf. Negev, *op. cit.*, n° 308.

<sup>36</sup> Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* ; par comparaison, on trouve avec *zyd*, le nom composé, *zyd<sup>c</sup>lhy*, Zayd<sup>c</sup>alahy, (CIS II, 187<sub>2</sub>, 302, RES 1427C).

## Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm à Palmyre

### La dédicace de deux autels par 'Ubaydū

Le dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm est connu aussi à Palmyre par une dédicace<sup>38</sup> et une tessère<sup>39</sup>.

L'inscription qui nous donne le plus d'informations sur le dieu est une inscription palmyrénienne dédiée par un soldat qui se présente comme nabatéen, mais dont la tribu est d'origine nord-arabique ; elle est datée de 132 de notre ère. Elle se présente sous la forme d'une dédicace d'autel de douze lignes, soigneusement gravées sur une de ses faces ; l'autel a été trouvé à l'est du temple de Bêl à Palmyre (CIS II, 3973).

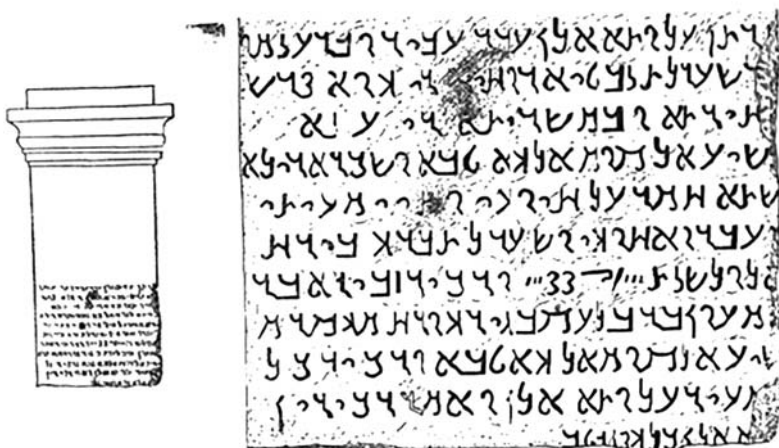


Fig. 5. Inscription palmyrénienne (CIS II, 3973).

- 1) [t]rtn 'lwt' 'ln 'bd 'bydw br 'nmw
- 2) [b]r š'dlt nbty' rwhy'[y] dy hw' prš

<sup>38</sup> CIS II, 3973 ; RES 285, 815 ; voir toutes les références dans John F. Healey, *Aramaic Inscriptions & Documents of the Roman Period*, Textbook of Roman Syrian Semitic Inscriptions II, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, n° 42, p. 211-214, fig. 7.

<sup>39</sup> André Caquot, *Recueil des tessères de Palmyre*, (RTP), Bibliothèque archéologique et historique LVIII, Geuthner, Paris, 1955, n° 332, p. 46, pl. XVIII.

- 3) [b]hyrt wbmšryt<sup>3</sup> dy 'n<sup>3</sup>
- 4) lš<sup>c</sup>lqwm 'lh<sup>3</sup> t̥b<sup>3</sup> wškr<sup>3</sup> dy l<sup>3</sup>
- 5) št<sup>3</sup> hmr<sup>3</sup> 'l hywhy whyy m'yty
- 6) w<sup>c</sup>bdw 'hwhy wš<sup>c</sup>dlt brh byrh
- 7) [ʔ]lwl šnt 4×100+40+3 wdkyr zbyd<sup>3</sup> br
- 8) [š]m<sup>c</sup>wn br bl<sup>c</sup>qb gyrrh wrhmh qdm
- 9) šy<sup>c</sup> 'lqwm 'lh<sup>3</sup> t̥b<sup>3</sup> wdkyr kl
- 10) .. m<sup>c</sup>yd 'lwt<sup>3</sup> 'ln w<sup>c</sup>mr dkyryn
- 11) [h]<sup>3</sup> 'ln klhwn b̥t̥b

La traduction est la suivante, d'après Charles Clermont-Ganneau<sup>40</sup> :

- 1) Ces deux autels (les) a faits 'Ubaydū, fils de 'Animū
- 2) fils de Ša<sup>c</sup>adallat le Nabatéen, des Rūḥayyā, qui était cavalier
- 3) à Hirta et dans le camp de 'Anā
- 4) pour Šay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm le dieu bon et rémunérateur qui ne
- 5) boit pas de vin, pour sa vie et la vie de Mu<sup>c</sup>aytī
- 6) et 'Abdū ses frères et Ša<sup>c</sup>adallat son fils, au mois de
- 7) 'Elūl, l'an 443, et qu'on se souvienne de Zubaydā fils de
- 8) Šim<sup>c</sup>ūn fils de Bel<sup>c</sup>qab, son protégé et son ami devant
- 9) Šay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm, le dieu bon et que soient commémorés quiconque
- 10) [visite]ra ces autels et dira que soient commémorés
- 11) tous en bien !

Cette inscription palmyrénienne émane d'un personnage, 'Ubaydū, qui développe sa généalogie : son patronyme 'Animū et son paponyme Ša<sup>c</sup>adallat, dont l'onomastique est nabatéenne<sup>41</sup> et nord-arabique<sup>42</sup> ; la mention de la généalogie au delà du père est plutôt rare chez les Nabatéens, mais courante chez les Safaïtiques. Il donne son ethnique nbty<sup>3</sup>, le Nabatéen, faisant en cela référence

<sup>40</sup> Clermont-Ganneau, *op. cit.*, p. 382-383.

<sup>41</sup> bydw : cf. Negev, *op. cit.*, n° 831, 'nmw : *ibid.*, n° 924.

<sup>42</sup> š<sup>c</sup>dlt : cf. Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 319, en thamoudique ; mais lt, Allāt, est aussi la grande déesse des Safaïtiques.

à son appartenance à l'ancien territoire nabatéen<sup>43</sup>, mais il précise aussi son lignage (*nisbah*), *rwḥy*<sup>44</sup>, ce qui n'est pas l'usage en nabatéen mais l'est au contraire en safaitique<sup>44</sup>. Il est donc plus que probable qu'il soit d'origine safaitique, et qu'il se soit fait enrôler dans une milice palmyrénienne<sup>45</sup> ; il a ainsi séjourné sur les bords de l'Euphrate, à la limite du territoire parthe, au fort de Ḥirta et à 'Anā, un poste militaire sur l'Euphrate, où l'on fabrique un vin renommé<sup>46</sup>.

L'inscription est en l'honneur d'un personnage, Zubaydā, que le dédicant appelle *gyrh wrḥmh*, « son protégé et son ami », et dont le patronyme et le paponyme sont également mentionnés ; on remarque que le patronyme est d'origine juive, *šm'wn*<sup>47</sup> ; le terme *gr*<sup>48</sup>, « client, protégé, ami », est écrit ici *gyr*<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> La mention de l'ethnique à l'état emphatique au singulier, *nbṭy*, « le Nabatéen », ne se rencontre qu'à l'extérieur du territoire de la Nabatène ou de l'Arabie romaine ; le nom propre *nbṭw* serait attesté à Pétra, cf. Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Enno Littmann, *Safaitic Inscriptions*, Publications of the Princeton Archaeological expedition to Syria in 1904-1905 and 1909, Div. I, Section C, 1943, p. 343, qui le cite comme un nom de tribu ; c'est aussi un anthroponyme, sous la forme *rwḥ*, cf. Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>45</sup> Les soldats peuvent aisément passer d'une armée à une autre, voir par exemple la défection des troupes du territoire de Philippe engagées par Hérode Antipas, et qui sont passées dans le camp d'Arétas IV, lors de la guerre de 34/36 de notre ère, cf. Flavius Josèphe, *AJ XVIII*, 5, 1-3, voir aussi Roche, *loc. cit.*, (2013), p. 112.

<sup>46</sup> Jean Starcky a mentionné le fort de Ḥirta (un toponyme) et le camp de 'Anā près de l'Euphrate, « Une inscription palmyrénienne trouvée près de l'Euphrate », *Syria* 40/1-2, 1963, p. 47-55 ; il propose de situer la présence de 'Ubaydū pendant la guerre parthique de Trajan, en 115-117 ; l'hypothèse pour protéger un comptoir palmyrénien de « la présence d'une milice palmyrénienne en territoire parthe ne va pas de soi » (p. 53, n. 15).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personnamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*, Hildesheim, 1966, p. 185 ; cet anthroponyme se rencontre également à Hégra, cf. Cantineau, *op. cit.* p. 151 (CIS II, 386<sub>2,3</sub>).

<sup>48</sup> Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>49</sup> On peut faire un parallèle entre cette dédicace palmyrénienne et une autre, nabatéenne, provenant d'aḏ-Ḍmayr, entre Damas et Palmyre (CIS II, 161) ; c'est l'offrande d'un autel votif, *msgd*, par un esclave affranchi à ses anciens patrons.

Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm y est appelé aux lignes 4 et 5, « dieu bon et rémunérateur qui ne boit pas de vin »<sup>50</sup>, une caractéristique remarquable car unique en palmyrénien. L'inscription CIS II, 3973 est datée de l'année 443 (de l'ère séleucide), selon le comput en usage dans les inscriptions palmyréniennes qui suit le calendrier séleucide utilisé dans la province romaine de Syrie ; l'inscription date donc de 132 de notre ère, soit moins d'une trentaine d'années après la réduction en province d'Arabie du royaume nabatéen, mais aussi à l'époque du début de la seconde révolte juive.

### Une tessère au nom du dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm

La seule autre mention de Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm à Palmyre se trouve sur une tessère (RTP 332)<sup>51</sup> ; au revers, le dieu est représenté coiffé d'un casque avec couvre joues rabattues ; au dessus sont représentés un croissant lunaire et un symbole solaire (cercle à trois rais en bas), et en dessous, un astre à huit rais.

<sup>50</sup> CIS II, 3973 ; RES 285, 815 ; Clermont-Ganneau, *op. cit.*, p. 382-402 ; Hackl & *al.*, *op. cit.*, B.001.02, p. 137-140 ; Javier Teixidor, « The Nabataean Presence at Palmyre », *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 5, 1973, p. 405-409 ; Klaas Dijkstra, *Life and Loyalty: A Study in the Socio-Religious Culture of Syria and Mesopotamia in the Greco-Roman Period Based on Epigraphical Evidence*, (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 128), Leyde, Brill, 1990, p. 108-110 ; G.A. Cooke, *A Textbook of North-Semitic Inscriptions: Moabite, Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, Nabataean, Palmyrene, Jewish*, Oxford, 1903, 140B, p. 303-305 ; Littmann, *op. cit.*, (1943), p. 70-75 ; Healey, *op. cit.*, (2001), p. 211-214.

<sup>51</sup> Caquot, *op. cit.*, n° 332, p. 46, pl. XVIII.



Fig. 6. Tessère de Palmyre (RTP 332).

L'inscription se lit ainsi, d'après André Caquot :

*b'ltk* [šy]<sup>q</sup>*lqwm*  
 À ton autel [šay<sup>q</sup>] al-Qawm

La restitution de la première partie du nom est assurée. Il faut suivre l'interprétation d'André Caquot<sup>52</sup> et non celle faisant de *b'ltk* un nom divin féminin<sup>53</sup>. L'expression *b-ltk* fait référence à un sacrifice ou à une offrande à l'autel du dieu ; on a vu que ce sont deux autels, 'lwt', que le soldat nabatéen offre au dieu dans l'inscription précédente CIS II, 3973<sub>1</sub> (*supra*).

Des symboles astraux sont tout à fait de mise pour un dieu protecteur des soldats, et donc des méharistes<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Joseph T. Milik a recherché une origine à ce nom divin supposé, *b'ltk*, qu'il traduit par « Ta Dame », mais sans expliquer la figure casquée du revers de la tessère, cf. Milik, *op. cit.*, p. 174 ; Healey, *op. cit.*, (2001), p. 146 suit l'interprétation d'une déesse (« possibly a title of Allāt/Astarte »).

<sup>54</sup> Sur les symboles astraux chez les Arabes safaitiques, cf. Ahmad Al-Jallad, « An ancient Arabian zodiac. The constellations in the Safaitic inscriptions, Part I », *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, 25/2, 2014, p. 214-230.

## Les témoignages des inscriptions safaitiques

### Les mentions de Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm dans les inscriptions safaitiques

Les sources safaitiques sur le dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm sont les plus nombreuses actuellement, et elles donnent des informations d'un caractère très différent de celui des inscriptions araméennes.

Les dédicaces safaitiques s'adressent au dieu dont le nom est écrit sous la forme š<sup>c</sup>hqm, Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm, et les inscriptions précisent les raisons de l'invocation.

Le dieu est associé parfois à d'autres divinités safaitiques comme la grande déesse nord-arabique Allāt, ou alors d'origine étrangère, comme le dieu syrien Ba'al-Shamīn, qui a son temple à Sī<sup>c</sup>, et le grand dieu nabatéen Dūsharā ; on leur demande par exemple le repos (jyrt, L 348).

On a signalé ci-dessus la similitude en safaitique du nom de Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm avec les théonymes formés sur gd, Gad, une divinité tutélaire dont le nom est suivi de celui du lignage : on a ainsi gd 'wd, « le Gad du lignage de 'Awḏ », ou gddf, « le Gad du lignage de Ḍayf »<sup>55</sup> ; le Gad est aussi la divinité protectrice d'un lieu ou d'un groupe dans les inscriptions palmyréniennes<sup>56</sup> ; en nabatéen, le Gad est assimilé à la *Fortuna* et fournit surtout des noms propres<sup>57</sup>.

Une remarquable inscription soigneusement gravée demande l'aide de cinq divinités, dont celle du dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm (LP 348<sub>2</sub>)<sup>58</sup> :

<sup>55</sup> Al-Jallad, *op. cit.*, (2015), p. 335, qm (C 3811, 4351; KRS 1015), « people » ; p. 314, gd 'wd, gddf ; cf. également Walter W. Müller, « The inscriptions on the Hellenistic Bronze statues from Nakhlat al-Ḥamrā' », *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 9, 1979, p. 68

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Milik, *op. cit.*, p. 99 : « Les Palmyréniens multipliaient facilement les cultes des Fortunes, qu'elles soient ethniques ou bien topiques. ».

<sup>57</sup> Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 76

<sup>58</sup> Littmann, *op. cit.*, (1943), n° 348, p. 90 .

l'ḏnt bn wrd bn ʾnʿm bn khl bn ʿm bn khl ḏ ʾl nḡbr  
 fhlt wšʿhqm wgdʿwḏ wbʿlsmn wḏšr ʿyrt lh  
 wʿwr wʿrn wnqʿt bwdd lḏ yʿwr hḡtt

La traduction est, d'après Enno Littmann :

Par ʿUdhaynat fils de Ward fils de ʾAnʿam fils de Kahil fils de  
 ʿAmm fils de Kahil de la tribu de Naghbar,  
 et ô Allat et Shayʿ ha-Qawm et Gad-ʿAwīdh et Baʿal-Shamīn et  
 Dūsharā [accorde-]lui le repos  
 Mais aveuglement et faiblesse et calamités pour celui qui aveugle  
 ces écrits.

Cette inscription est vraisemblablement du III<sup>e</sup> siècle, car l'auteur porte un nom similaire à celui du prince palmyrénien Odheïnath (c. 251-268), actif dans le troisième quart du III<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>59</sup> ; elle constitue un bon exemple de la variété des divinités honorées par les Safaïtiques : trois sont d'origine safaïtique, Allāt, Gad-ʿAwīdh et Shayʿ ha-Qawm, et deux autres d'origine étrangère, Baʿal-Shamīn et Dūsharā ; seul Gad-ʿAwīdh a un culte limité au domaine safaïtique.

Une autre inscription remarquable est datée de l'an 24, de la province d'Arabie (LP 1198) :

<sup>59</sup> Maurice Sartre, *D'Alexandre à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique, IV<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C. - III<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J.-C.*, Paris, Fayard, 2001, p. 972-979 ; il est nommé exarque des Palmyréniens en 252 et assassiné en 268.



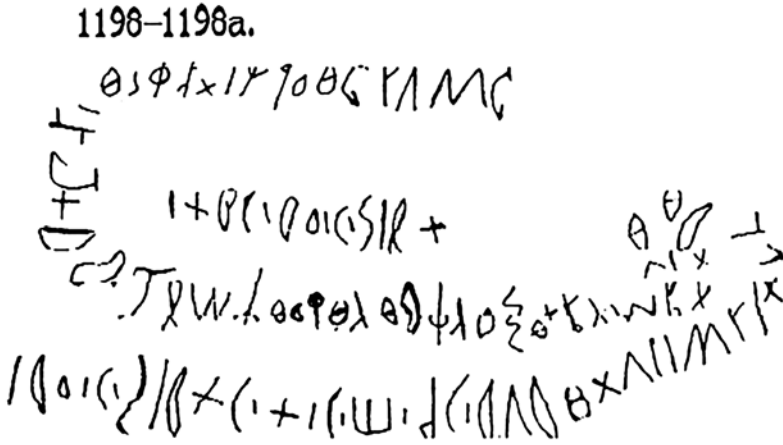


Fig. 7. Inscription safaitique (Littmann 1943, n° 1198).

*lm'n bn ġlmt bn hl bn hny bn ms{k} wtsll fhlt s{l}m wwsn {s}{n}t XXIV  
f h{l}lt w š'hqm wh{g}{d}w d fš{y}{t} m-mt k'n wnq't l-d y'wr h-sfr*

La traduction est, d'après Enno Littmann :

Par M<sup>n</sup> fils de Ġlmt fils de Hl fils de Hny fils de Mš{k} et il s'est  
échappé — et ô Allat, paix — et il a profondément dormi  
l'an XXIV (129).

Alors, ô Allat et Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm et ô Gad <sup>c</sup>Awidh, délivrance d'une  
mort imminente ! Mais profanaion pour celui qui efface  
ces écrits.

Shai<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm est ici invoqué en compagnie de Allāt, en premier  
lieu, et ensuite de Gad-<sup>c</sup>Awidh, la divinité tutélaire de la tribu  
<sup>c</sup>Awidh.

D'après la lecture d'Enno Littmann, l'inscription est datée de  
l'ère de l'éparchie, ce qui est très rare, mais correspond sans  
doute à la pratique en usage dans l'armée ; l'année 24 équivaut à  
129 de notre ère. Enno Littmann interprète les signes des chiffres  
comme étant d'origine nabatéenne ; il note cependant que le

chiffre IV (en forme de croix de Saint André) est placé avant le signe XX, ce qui correspond à l'usage parlé en langue arabe<sup>60</sup>.

Les modes de vie au désert sont évoqués parfois dans ces inscriptions qui demandent l'aide et la protection du dieu : le chameau est bien sûr nommé, sous son nom collectif (<sup>ʿ</sup>bl, KRS 225), mais aussi plus précisément sous celui du chameau mâle (gml, KRS 1307)<sup>61</sup> ; de même la sécheresse, catastrophique, est mentionnée (<sup>ʿ</sup>slf h-rwy m h-ḥm, ASWS 124).

Mais ce qui inquiète surtout les auteurs des inscriptions ce sont les conflits intertribaux et aussi les relations tendues avec les autorités, d'abord les Nabatéens dans l'armée desquels ils servent, puis surtout les Romains<sup>62</sup>, qui les recrutent aussi pour les troupes auxiliaires et parfois les enrôlent de force<sup>63</sup>.

Le contenu des dédicaces met l'accent sur le besoin de sécurité, ce qui est en accord avec le rôle spécifique du dieu. Le terme traduit par « paix » revient le plus fréquemment (šlm, cf. CIS V, 1744, 1936, 4039 ; KRS 15, HaNSB 304, ZeWa 1) ; les dédicaces se terminent souvent par une invocation du type « ... et ô Šay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm [donne] la paix » (fš<sup>c</sup>ḥqm šlm, L 415) ; « ... et ô Šay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm [donne] la paix au groupe » (fš<sup>c</sup>ḥqm šlm lh<sup>tt</sup>, L 417). À l'occasion, la supplique est plus explicite, et l'auteur demande de l'aide : « Par Jaram'il fils de Ġaiyar'il fils de Šabāh. Et il était dans l'attente de ses deux frères ? Et ô Šay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm, fais venir de l'aide contre le danger » (lgrm'l bn ġyr'l bn šbh whrs ḥwh fš<sup>c</sup>ḥqm ʿly lh m'n mb's, W&H 1696)<sup>64</sup>. Dans la même veine, on lui demande la délivrance (fšyt, ASWS 124).

Les autres prières, comme à d'autres divinités, ont pour objet l'abondance (ġnyt, C 1744 ; KRS 15, 225), c'est-à-dire des pâturages.

<sup>60</sup> Littmann, *op. cit.*, (1943), p. 265.

<sup>61</sup> La chamelle est appelée *h-bkrt*, cf. Al-Jallad, *op. cit.*, (2015), p. 308.

<sup>62</sup> Ali Yunes Al-Manaser, *Ein Korpus neuer safaitischer Inschriften aus Jordanien*, Semitica et Semitohamitica Berolinensia 10, Aachen, Shaker Verlag, 2008, p. 29-30.

<sup>63</sup> Sur les rapports entre les populations safaitiques et les Romains, voir ma contribution à paraître, « Judée, Arabie, Saba », dans Giusto Traina (éd.), *Les sources orientales du monde romain*, Les Belles Lettres.

<sup>64</sup> Winnett & Harding, *op. cit.*, n° 1696, p. 271 ; d'après les auteurs, la demande de protection est en faveur du dédicant lui-même plutôt que de ses frères.

Un ton plus véhément s'exprime à l'occasion pour demander la protection de l'inscription : « ... ô Šai<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm, prends pitié de celui qui laisse intacte (l'inscription), et aveugle celui qui aveugle (l'inscription) ! » (*fhš<sup>c</sup>hqm hnn lđ s<sup>r</sup> w<sup>c</sup>wr d<sup>c</sup>wr hsf<sup>r</sup>*, W&H 151a)<sup>65</sup>.

On connaît le nom de certaines tribus dont des membres honoraient Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm ; les noms de tribus sont introduits par la formule *d l*, « de la tribu de ». Une tribu est appelée Qamar (*qmr*, HaNSB 304)<sup>66</sup>, une autre est appelée 'Ashall (*ʿšll*, KRS 68)<sup>67</sup> ; celle de l'époque de Malichos II est appelée Qashm (*qš{m}*, Ze-Wa 1)<sup>68</sup>. L'inscription de 'Odhaynat du III<sup>e</sup> siècle mentionne sa tribu de Naghbar (*nğbr*, LP 348<sub>1</sub>). On a vu que l'inscription palmyrénienne mentionne le nom de la tribu du dédicant, les Rūḥayyā (*rwḥy<sup>ʿ</sup>*, CIS II, 3973)<sup>69</sup>. Ces noms de tribus sont tirés souvent de noms de personnes, et sont très répandus en safaitique.

Je n'ai trouvé trace que d'une seule inscription safaitique, mentionnée par Schirin Rawan, qui fasse référence au « dieu qui ne boit pas de vin », donc très probablement à Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm<sup>70</sup>. Cette mention est très importante car cette expression, qui caractérise le dieu arabe dans l'inscription de Palmyre, apparaît pour la première fois dans son domaine linguistique propre.

On a vu ci-dessus que le nom du dieu pouvait être utilisé pour des anthroponymes théophores nabatéens. On en a aussi des exemples en safaitique ; d'après l'ouvrage de Gerald L. Harding, on trouve 31 occurrences de *š<sup>c</sup>l*, « Shay<sup>c</sup> est dieu », en safaitique<sup>71</sup>, ce qui se réfère très probablement à Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 151a, p. 66

<sup>66</sup> Cette tribu est connue par ailleurs, cf. Littmann, *op. cit.*, (1943), n° 254, 355.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. l'anthroponyme, *ibid.*, n° 525, 526.

<sup>68</sup> Nom de tribu, *ibid.*, n° 707.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *rwḥ*, *ibid.*, n° 1269, 1300.

<sup>70</sup> Shirin Rawan, *Neue safaitische Inschriften aus Süd-Syrien*, Semitica et Semito-hamitica Berolinensia 16, Aachen, Shaker Verlag, 2013, n° 41, p. 112, citant une thèse inédite en arabe (ar-Rousan 1987, p. 436).

<sup>71</sup> Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 349 ; aucune occurrence n'est attestée en thamoudique.

## Aire de dispersion des attestations du culte de Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm

L'aire de dispersion des inscriptions mentionnant le dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm est vaste. Les inscriptions safaitiques se trouvent en particulier dans le Ḥawrān et dans le Ḥarra, le « désert noir » à l'est.

Le Ḥawrān (*ḥrn*, KRS 1706) est ainsi mentionné dans une inscription honorant Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm ; on a vu que deux des trois inscriptions nabatéennes proviennent du Ḥawrān (*RES* 86 et 471 ; Littmann 1914, n° 18) ; c'est une région très fréquentée par les Safaitiques, en particulier au sud et aussi à Sī<sup>c</sup>, à l'ouest, où se trouve le grand sanctuaire à Ba'alshamīn ; ils y honorent le dieu qui apporte les nuages annonciateurs de la pluie dans le Ḥarra.

Mais une autre région est mentionnée dans une inscription safaitique adressée au dieu, celle menant de Galaad à Palmyre (*gl<sup>c</sup>d l-tdmr*, KRS 15), et qui s'étend donc de la rive orientale du Jourdain au sud-est de la mer de Galilée jusqu'au centre du désert syrien, d'où provient d'ailleurs l'inscription palmyrénienne mentionnée. On a vu plus haut que le dédicant de cette inscription palmyrénienne a séjourné à Ḥirta et à 'Anā, sur l'Euphrate<sup>72</sup>.

On ajoutera à cette liste concernant l'aire de dispersion des inscriptions safaitiques les autres régions déjà nommées : le Ḥawrān nabatéen et Hégra ; de Pétra et du Sinaï proviennent des anthroponymes théophores.

Ces séjours dans des régions excentrées du domaine safaitique s'expliquent non seulement par les routes caravanières, mais surtout par les fonctions militaires que les nomades exerçaient sous les rois nabatéens, puis dans l'armée romaine et les milices palmyréniennes, comme troupes auxiliaires ; ils sont ainsi considérés comme Nabatéens par les Romains et les Palmyréniens.

<sup>72</sup> 'Anā était un site réputé pour son vin, cf. Mohammed Maraqtan, « Wine Drinking and Wine Prohibition in Arabia before Islam », *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 23, 1993, p. 101 : « Some of these wine names are given according to their place of origin, like *al-ʿāniyya*, wine from 'Āna on the Euphrates ».

### Chronologie des inscriptions safaitiques mentionnant le dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm

La plus ancienne mention de Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm dans une inscription safaitique date probablement de l'époque du roi Malichos II, qui a régné de 39/40 à 70/71. L'inscription est datée de « l'année où Malichos roi de Nabatène a abattu trente unités de cavalerie, soldats des Romains » (šnt ṭrq mk mlk nbṭ ṭlṭn m't qtl 'l rm, ZeWa 1). 'l rm désigne les Romains, selon toute probabilité<sup>73</sup> ; cette dernière mention ne peut guère se rapporter qu'à l'époque de Malichos II, mais cet épisode est absent de nos sources historiques, c'est-à-dire principalement des ouvrages de Flavius Josèphe. On peut supposer une attaque ponctuelle à l'époque de la première révolte juive, peut-être en rapport avec la révolte de Damasī, dans le sud du royaume<sup>74</sup>.

Les autres inscriptions safaitiques mentionnant le dieu datent de l'époque de la province romaine d'Arabie ; on a vu la mention de la date de 24 (de l'éparchie), c'est-à-dire 129/130 de notre ère (šn]t XX+IV, LP 1198)<sup>75</sup> (fig. 8), et elle est donc contemporaine de l'inscription de Palmyre (*supra*) ; selon Littmann, elle émane d'un soldat déserteur de l'armée romaine ; c'est aussi l'époque des prémices de la seconde révolte juive en Judée.

Certaines inscriptions safaitiques qui mentionnent le dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> ha-Qawm sont vraisemblablement du III<sup>e</sup> siècle, car elles contiennent l'anthroponyme palmyrénien 'Odhaynat, 'dynt<sup>76</sup> ('dnt

<sup>73</sup> Sur cette question, voir note 63.

<sup>74</sup> Il pourrait s'agir éventuellement de membres de la tribu de 'Ad, à Wādī Ramm, appelé 'rm (Iram), et qui ont participé à la révolte de Damasī, à l'époque de la première guerre juive, cf. Fred Winnett, « The Revolt of Damasi: Safaitic and Nabataean Evidence », *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 211, 1973 ; des combats sont représentés à côté de graffites nabatéens dans un site rupestre de Wādī Ramm, mais ne sont pas datés. Les tribus arabes fournissent des troupes auxiliaires aux Romains.

<sup>75</sup> Les chiffres sont ceux du nabatéen ; Littmann, *op. cit.*, (1943), note que le signe « quatre », qui est en forme de croix comme le chiffre nabatéen, vient en premier, suivi du signe « vingt », ce qui reflète la langue parlée, mais aussi parce que la direction de l'écriture en safaitique change de sens suivant les lignes.

<sup>76</sup> Jürgen Kurt Starck *Personal Names in Palmyrene Inscriptions*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 2.

LP 348), (*supra*) ; de même, la référence à « la reine » (*mlkt*, HAU1 182) concerne très vraisemblablement la reine de Palmyre Zénobie (269-272) qui, en 271, lance une offensive au Proche-Orient, en Arabie romaine et dans les régions voisines<sup>77</sup>.

Par comparaison, les inscriptions nabatéennes remontent aussi au 1<sup>er</sup> siècle de notre ère : on a vu que le graffiti nabatéen de Hégra date probablement du milieu du 1<sup>er</sup> siècle et que l'inscription de Ghariya est de 95/6 de notre ère, à l'époque de Rabbel II.

La période concernée par les inscriptions safaitiques, nabatéennes et palmyréniennes mentionnant le dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm s'étend donc du début ou du milieu du 1<sup>er</sup> siècle de notre ère au dernier tiers du III<sup>e</sup> siècle ; mais on ne connaît pas d'attestations du nom du dieu datant d'avant notre ère. On mettra à part les anthroponymes théophores dans de simples signatures, qui ne peuvent être précisément datés.

## Les interprétations actuelles

### Un dieu arabe

Les interprétations sur le dieu diffèrent, sauf sur son origine arabe. René Dussaud avait très justement proposé de voir dans ce dieu une divinité safaitique<sup>78</sup>. Charles Clermont-Ganneau a été le premier à proposer, peu après la découverte de l'inscription palmyrénienne, une interprétation cohérente : il a rapproché cette interdiction d'offrir des libations au dieu de celle de boire du vin,

<sup>77</sup> Sur ces événements, cf. Sartre, *op. cit.*, p. 971-983 ; il doit s'agir de Zénobie plutôt que de Shaqilat II, régente de son fils Rabbel II pendant sa minorité (70/71-74/74), bien que cela ne soit pas exclu car elle a dû faire face à « la révolte de Damas » par les tribus nord-arabiques, cf. Winnett, *op. cit.*, p. 54-57 ; Glen Warren Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*, Cambridge/Londres, Harvard University Press, 1983, p. 72, n. 80, n. 156.

<sup>78</sup> R. Dussaud & F. Macler, *op. cit.*, (1901), p. 186-188, n° 62 a, b ; Id., *op. cit.*, (1903), p. 309-310, n° 8 ; RES 86, 471 ; Cantineau, *op. cit.*, p. 20-21 ; Healey, *op. cit.*, (2001), p. 144 ; Healey, *op. cit.*, (2009), p. 117-118 ; Hackl & al., *op. cit.*, p. 193-195.

attestée chez les anciens Nabatéens d'après Diodore de Sicile (XIX, 94, 2) : « ils ont pour coutume de ne pas boire de vin... ».

Dominique Sourdel a donné dans son ouvrage sur les cultes du Ḥawrān une synthèse sur ce culte arabe<sup>79</sup> ; le rapprochement avec le dieu Lycurgue des inscriptions grecques du Ḥawrān ne lui semble pas convaincant. Jean Starcky présentait ainsi le dieu en 1966<sup>80</sup> :

L'appellation Shay<sup>c</sup> al-qawm aura d'abord qualifié El et Ilah, puis désigné un dieu distinct, selon un processus bien connu dans les religions sémitiques. En tout cas, il a été considéré par les nomades comme leur dieu spécifique, puisque le soldat nabatéen 'Obaidu lui offre deux autels dont la dédicace précise que Shay<sup>c</sup> al-qawm « ne boit pas de vin » (CIS II, 3973).

Dans son ouvrage sur les cultes arabes de 1968, Toufic Fahd identifie Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm à un lionceau ou à un lion, et il récuse des interprétations stellaires<sup>81</sup> ; il note que « le duel Šay'ân désigne un territoire » en Arabie du Sud, et en conclut qu'« il semble avoir été connu comme Gad dédoublé » dans cette région. Si l'on peut contester ses interprétations, il reste que la notion de Gad paraît très bien convenir au dieu arabe.

En 1979, Javier Teixidor présente le dieu comme une sorte d'ange protecteur des voyageurs, comme l'ange de Yahweh en rapport avec l'Exode des anciens Israelites<sup>82</sup>. Dans un article de 1984, Axel Knauf identifie Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm au dieu nord-arabique Ruḏā/Arṣū, à travers l'aspect militaire du dieu arabe, et par là à Dūsharā ; selon lui, le rapport au vin revêt une désapprobation

<sup>79</sup> Dominique Sourdel, *Les cultes du Hauran à l'époque romaine*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique LIII, Paris, Geuthner, 1953, p. 81-84 ; l'auteur commente d'ailleurs dans la même rubrique Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm et Lycurgue, tout en doutant de leur identification par Clermont-Ganneau, p. 83-84.

<sup>80</sup> Jean Starcky, « Pétra et la Nabatène », dans *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*, tome septième, Paris, 1966, c. 996.

<sup>81</sup> Toufic Fahd, *Le panthéon de l'Arabie centrale à la veille de l'Hégire*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique LXXXVIII, Paris, Geuthner, 1968, p. 153-154.

<sup>82</sup> Javier Teixidor, *The Pantheon of Palmyra*, Leyde, Brill, 1979, p. 85-88.

générale, plutôt qu'une abstinence temporaire en temps de guerre sacrée<sup>83</sup>.

Plus récemment, dans sa synthèse sur la religion nabatéenne de 2001, John Healey constate que l'expression d'origine arabe, « celui qui accompagne ou aide le peuple », est tout à fait inhabituelle pour un théonyme nabatéen, et reflète un rôle de protecteur de caravaniers ou de soldats<sup>84</sup>.

Les trois caractéristiques du dieu à travers les inscriptions qui l'ont mentionné — nabatéennes, palmyréniennes et safaitiques — peuvent se résumer ainsi : divinité accompagnant le peuple, bienveillante, abstinent ; c'est ce que résument les lignes 4 et 5 de l'inscription palmyrénienne : ...š<sup>c</sup>lqwm 'lh' ṭb' wškr' dy l'/št' ḥmr'... , « ...pour Šay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm, le dieu bon et rémunérateur, qui ne/boit pas de vin... ».

### Sur l'abstinence du vin

La question de l'abstinence du vin chez les Arabes nomades a été plusieurs fois étudiée<sup>85</sup>. Deux sources indépendantes mentionnent une telle abstinence dans le contexte des coutumes liées au nomadisme sur les marges de la Syrie Palestine.

L'abstinence du vin, avec d'autres interdits, caractérise en particulier les Rékabites mentionnés dans la Bible ; c'est une coutume héritée des ancêtres<sup>86</sup> :

Nous ne buvons pas de vin car notre ancêtre Yonodab, fils de Rékab, nous a donné cet ordre : “Vous ne boirez jamais de vin, ni vous ni vos fils ; de même vous ne devez pas bâtir de maison, ni faire de semailles, ni planter de vigne, ni posséder rien de tout cela ; mais c'est sous des tentes que vous habiterez toute votre vie, afin de vivre de longs jours sur le sol où vous séjournerez” ». (Jr 35, 6-7)

<sup>83</sup> Axel E. Knauf, « Dushara and Shai al-Qaum », *ARAM* 2, 1990, p. 175-183 (179-180).

<sup>84</sup> Healey, *op. cit.*, (2001), p. 147.

<sup>85</sup> Voir, en dernier lieu, l'important article de Maraqtan, *loc. cit.*, p. 95-115.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Clermont-Ganneau, *op. cit.*, p. 382-402.



On a fait le rapprochement entre cette tribu judéenne des Rekabites et les anciennes coutumes nabatéennes, sans qu'il y ait un lien direct. En effet, selon Diodore de Sicile, les nomades nabatéens au début de l'époque hellénistique suivent des interdits :

Ils ont pour coutume de ne pas semer de grains, de ne pas planter d'arbres fruitiers, de ne pas boire de vin et de ne pas construire de maisons. (BH, XIX, 94)

Ces interdits ont été parfois interprétés comme de simples *topoi*<sup>87</sup>. Dans le cas des Nabatéens mentionnés par Diodore, il s'agit en fait d'une stratégie de survie grâce à laquelle ils sauvegardent leur liberté face aux puissants empires<sup>88</sup>, comme le rappelle fièrement du haut de sa forteresse naturelle le chef arabe nabatéen répondant au général grec venu l'assiéger, en 311 avant notre ère :

... nous qui habitons dans le désert, dans des lieux sans eau, sans grains, sans vin, sans rien... (BH, 97, 3)

Il paraît cependant difficile de parler de rapport entre les Rekabites et les Nabatéens ; il ne s'agit pas d'une filiation, mais d'un trait culturel partagé par des populations nomades<sup>89</sup>. Le rapprochement a été fait aussi entre les Rékabites et le dieu Shay<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Qawm<sup>90</sup>, mais on ne peut trouver une filiation entre eux ; il s'agit dans les deux cas de traditions d'origines différentes, bien qu'en lien avec les conditions de vie au désert.

En revanche, la similitude entre les anciennes coutumes nabatéennes et le mode de vie des Safaïtiques, tel qu'il ressort des inscriptions, est évidente. Pour les Nabatéens, le passage de la vie nomade, avec ses interdits, à une vie sédentaire, où ils n'étaient

<sup>87</sup> Pierre Briant, *États et pasteurs au Moyen-Orient ancien*, Paris, 1982, citant les Rékabites, p. 39.

<sup>88</sup> Ce mode de vie est complémentaire de celui des sédentaires ; c'est le système appelé « structure dimorphique » de deux groupes sociaux, cf. M.B. Rowton, « Dimorphic structure and typology », *Oriens antiquus* 15, 1976, p. 17-31.

<sup>89</sup> Cela est devenu d'autant plus nécessaire avec les invasions des Assyriens et des Babyloniens au 1<sup>er</sup> millénaire avant notre ère.

<sup>90</sup> Maraqtan, *loc. cit.*, p. 109-111.

plus respectés, peut s'expliquer non pas par le caractère religieux des anciennes coutumes nabatéennes, mais par une adaptation à de nouvelles conditions de vie, moins menacées par les empires voisins. Entre 312, date de l'attaque des Grecs sur « la Roche » et le III<sup>e</sup> siècle avant notre ère, une évolution rapide vers un mode de vie semi-sédentaire se dessine et l'usage du vin est attesté par des trouvailles d'amphores de vin de Chios à Pétra<sup>91</sup>. Le pragmatisme des Nabatéens a pris en compte les nouvelles conditions politiques de l'époque hellénistique, qui ne nécessitent plus une vie strictement nomade.

On trouve dans une inscription funéraire palmyrénienne, après le nom du défunt, la mention « buveur d'eau »<sup>92</sup> ; cette formule fait pendant à celle de la dédicace palmyrénienne à Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm, précisant qu'il est le dieu « qui ne boit pas de vin » (*supra*) ; l'onomastique de cette inscription funéraire est arabe et reflète donc des traditions liées au mode de vie nomade. À l'opposé, on trouve la mention de l'usage du vin sur un ostrakon araméen d'Idumée, qui est un exercice de scribe ; il est écrit aux lignes 7-9 : « ceux qui ont bu du vin/à Idnah : Qoṣḥann/Qoṣḥann, Qozi »<sup>93</sup> ;

<sup>91</sup> Des fragments d'amphores à vin de Rhodes, datant environ des années 220-167 avant notre ère, ont été trouvés dans les niveaux hellénistiques des fouilles du centre de Pétra, cf. R. Wenning, *Die Nabatäer — Denkmäler und Geschichte. Eine Bestandesaufnahme des archäologischen Befundes*, Novum Testamentum et Oriens Antiquus 3, Universitäts Verlag/Freiburg Schweiz, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht/Göttingen, 1987, p. 200 ; les fouilles d'une habitation à az-Zantur sont datées entre le III<sup>e</sup> siècle et le I<sup>er</sup> siècle avant notre ère, cf. Bernhard Kolb, « Petra — From Tent to Mansion: Living on the terraces of Es-Zantur », in *Petra Rediscovered*, Glen Markoe, éd., Londres, 2003, p. 230 ; sur la question de la sédentarisation des Nabatéens, cf. Marie-Jeanne Roche, « Les débuts de l'implantation nabatéenne à Pétra », *Transeuphratène* 8, 1994, p. 35-46.

<sup>92</sup> André Lemaire, « Notes d'épigraphie nord-ouest sémitique », *Semitica* 40, 1991, p. 52-53, l. 1-2 : ḥbl mqymw/št'my', « Hélas ! Modîm(?)/buveur d'eau » ; je remercie André Lemaire, qui m'a signalé cette référence.

<sup>93</sup> Lignes 7-9 : « zy štyw ḥmr<sup>2</sup>/b'dnh qwshnn/qwshnn qwzy », André Lemaire, *Nouvelles inscriptions araméennes d'Idumée* II, Suppl. n° 9 à *Transeuphratène*, éd. J. Elayi et J. Sapin, Paris, Gabalda, 2002 ; Id., « Levantine Epigraphy and Samaria, Judaea and Idumaea during the Achaemenid Period », dans *Levantine Epigraphy and History in the Achaemenid Period (539-332)*, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 119-121. Je remercie André Lemaire pour ces informations.

là encore, c'est l'onomastique, iduméenne en l'occurrence, qui peut expliquer une telle formule : en effet, on ne trouve pas de nom arabe dans le site de Idnah, alors que des Qédarites et des Arabes sont mentionnés sur un autre site iduméen, à Maresha<sup>94</sup>. L'ostracon iduméen mentionnant le « buveur d'eau » date du iv<sup>e</sup> siècle et est donc contemporain de la présence nabatéenne dans la région de Pétra, à l'époque où il est rapporté par Diodore de Sicile que cette tribu arabe a banni l'usage du vin (*supra*).

Mais ce n'est pas du côté des dieux nabatéens comme Dūsharā qu'il faut chercher un parallèle à l'interdit du vin dans le cas du dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm.

L'interdit du vin touche aussi une figure biblique, la mère de Samson ; dans son cas, c'est le prêtre qui lui interdit le vin et toute boisson enivrante, car elle doit donner naissance à un futur *nazir*, Samson, qui lui-même n'a pas le droit de couper ses cheveux au risque de perdre sa force<sup>95</sup>. Le prêtre s'adresse ainsi à la future mère de Samson :

Désormais, prends bien garde ! Ne bois ni vin, ni boisson fermentée, et ne mange rien d'impur. Car tu vas concevoir et tu enfanteras un fils. Le rasoir ne passera pas sur sa tête car l'enfant sera nazir de Dieu dès le sein de sa mère. (Jg 13, 4-5)

Cet interdit du vin n'est donc pas, dans ce cas, un respect de coutumes ancestrales ; il est, en revanche, une prohibition pour protéger dès avant sa naissance un individu destiné à être un *nazir*, car doué d'une force extraordinaire.

Dans ce cas, l'interdit religieux du vin mais aussi de toute boisson fermentée et de « nourriture impure » caractérise le *nazir*, ou oblat dans la religion juive ; cet interdit touche en principe les boissons comme la bière, le vin de datte, le lait fermenté, et aussi le pain levé, car issu de la fermentation.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Brannon Wheeler, « Arab Prophets of the Qur'an and Bible », *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8/2, 2006, p. 24-57 ; sur le *nazir*, voir l'étude récente de Christophe Lemardelé, *Les cheveux du Nazir. De Samson à Jacques, frère de Jésus*, Paris, Le Cerf, 2016, p. 233-242.

## Parallèles avec le prophète Jean le Baptiste

Jean le Baptiste présente avec le dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm plusieurs points communs. En effet, des parallèles existent entre la figure du prophète juif et celle du dieu arabe Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm, dans un contexte religieux tout à fait différent, mais dans un temps et un espace communs limités.

Les sources concernant le prophète Jean à l'époque du tétrarque Hérode Antipas sont d'abord des mentions dans les Évangiles, où il est appelé le Précurseur ou le Baptiste. Son ministère se passe en Judée, près du Jourdain mais aussi à Béthanie sur l'autre rive (Jn 1, 28)<sup>96</sup>. Sur la carte de Madaba, le lieu de la prédication de Jean est appelé ΑΙΝΩΝ, Ainôn, proche du désert de Moab symbolisé par une gazelle<sup>97</sup>.



Fig. 8. Le site de Ainôn sur la carte de Madaba (ph. M.-J. Roche).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Jeremy M. Hutton, « 'Bethany beyond the Jordan' in Text, Tradition, and Historical Geography », *Biblica* 89/3, 2008, p. 305-328.

<sup>97</sup> Herbert Donner, *The Mosaic Map of Madaba*, *Palestine Antiqua* 7, Kampen, 1992.

Les Évangiles sont la source la plus complète, sur sa naissance, son ministère, son emprisonnement et son exécution ; Flavius Josèphe mentionne aussi les circonstances et l'épisode de son exécution, mais en donnant à la décision d'Hérode Antipas un caractère politique car dicté par la crainte d'une insurrection populaire (AJ XVIII, 116-118).

### Une personnalité bienfaitrice

Les inscriptions comme les textes insistent sur le caractère bienveillant de chacune des deux figures, l'une divine, l'autre prophétique. Jean, comme le dieu arabe, est caractérisé par des expressions mettant l'accent sur ce rôle. Le nom hébreu de Jean, *Yôhânân*, *Yehôhânân* (*yhnn*, *yhwḥnn*)<sup>98</sup>, « Dieu est favorable », est l'équivalent d'un nom safaitique, *ḥnnʿl*, « Dieu est grâce »<sup>99</sup> ; Flavius Josèphe insiste aussi sur la bonté de Jean (AJ XVIII, [117]). Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm est appelé « Dieu bon et rémunérateur » dans l'inscription palmyrénienne citée (CIS II, 3973<sub>4</sub>) ; on a vu les demandes répétées de salut, *šlm*, qui sont faites au dieu dans les inscriptions safaitiques. C'est bien sûr une demande habituelle faite aux divinités safaitiques, mais dans le cas de Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm, on ne trouve pratiquement pas de demande de butin ou de vengeance, comme c'est le cas pour Allāt ou Gad. Ce caractère bienveillant est aussi partagé par le dieu nord-arabique *Ruḏā*, dont le nom veut dire « Favorable » et dont le domaine est l'Arabie du Nord (oasis de Dūmat al-Jandal)<sup>100</sup>, et par un autre prophète contemporain, Jésus, en Galilée et en Judée.

<sup>98</sup> Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*, Hildesheim, 1966, n° 665a, p. 246, et n° 597, p. 245.

<sup>99</sup> Littmann, *op. cit.*, (1943), p. xxvi : anthroponymes théophores.

<sup>100</sup> Starcky, *loc. cit.*, (1966), c. 990-991.

## Un guide

La notion de celui qui mène la troupe, comme un berger son troupeau, sert à former le nom même du dieu Shay‘ al-Qawm, et on la trouve, sous une forme imagée, dans l’annonce que fait l’ange Gabriel à Zacharie d’un fils ; des parallèles existent entre le texte de Luc et celui de Juges 13 de la Septante<sup>101</sup>. L’ange utilise des expressions bien particulières :

16. « ...et il ramènera de nombreux fils d’Israël au Seigneur leur Dieu ;

17. Et lui-même marchera devant lui avec l’esprit et l’énergie d’Élie, pour ramener les cœurs des pères vers leurs enfants, et les rebelles à la sagesse des justes, pour préparer au Seigneur un peuple bien disposé. » (Lc 1.16-17)

L’image qu’il donne de Jean est celle d’un prophète amenant les fidèles devant Dieu. Si Jean est comparé à un nouvel Élie, c’est aussi parce qu’il s’oppose à une reine, Hérodiade, comme avant lui Élie s’opposait à Athalie.

À différentes reprises, les Évangiles mentionnent les foules venant écouter Jean et se faire baptiser<sup>102</sup> :

Et s’en allaient vers lui le pays de Judée et tous les habitants de Jérusalem. (Mc 1, 5)

Alors s’en allaient vers lui Jérusalem, toute la Judée et toute la région du Jourdain. (Mt 3, 5)

Une autre source concernant Jean est celle des *Antiquités juives* de Flavius Josèphe, où l’accent est mis sur le rôle politique du prophète, très populaire en Judée, et qui s’oppose à Hérode Antipas :

<sup>101</sup> Sur ces parallèles et la figure du *nazir*, voir Lemardelé, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

<sup>102</sup> Cette figure du prophète parlant aux foules a été représentée par les artistes de l’époque moderne, comme le peintre Francesco Solimena (Musée des Beaux-arts, Lyon), alors que les anciennes mosaïques mettaient l’accent sur le baptême de Jésus et sur l’exécution du Précurseur à Machéronte. La figure prophétique de Jean et sa mort ont inspiré aussi les compositeurs d’opéras, comme Jules Massenet dans *Hérodiade* (1881) et Richard Strauss, dans *Salome* (1905).

[118] Des gens s'étaient rassemblés autour de lui, car ils étaient très exaltés en l'entendant parler. Hérode craignait qu'une telle faculté de persuader ne suscitât une révolte, la foule semblant prête à suivre en tout les conseils de cet homme. (AJ XVIII, [118])

Selon Flavius Josèphe, c'est donc la crainte que Jean ne suscitât des troubles qui poussa le tétrarque à le faire décapiter dans sa prison ; cette interprétation politique du prophète est sans doute plus proche de la réalité que celle des Évangiles, qui mettent au premier plan la vengeance d'Hérodiade par sa fille Salomé interposée, un épisode probablement romancé.

À l'époque byzantine, Eusèbe de Césarée mentionne aussi Jean, se référant aux Évangiles pour son rôle de Baptiste, et insistant aussi sur sa mort, suivant en cela les traditions évangéliques<sup>103</sup> :

[6] Tout le peuple s'attroupait autour de lui, et ils étaient suspendus à ses lèvres. Hérode craignit qu'il n'usât de son ascendant sur les hommes pour les porter à quelque révolution ; car ils lui paraissaient disposés à tout faire sur son conseil. (XI, 6)

On a vu que Jean était en contact avec les milieux populaires, dont les soldats (*supra*).

Les soldats, en partie d'origine arabe, sont recrutés par les princes locaux, et à l'occasion, changent de camp ; on a ainsi la mention d'une partie des soldats d'Hérode Antipas engagés dans le conflit entre Hérode Antipas et Arétas IV, et qui appartenaient à la tétrarchie de Philippe, qui ont déserté pour rejoindre le camp nabatéen (AJ XVIII, 5, [114]). Cette mixité favorise la circulation des informations et les échanges.

<sup>103</sup> Eusèbe de Césarée, *Histoire ecclésiastique* ; Chapitre XI [témoignages concernant Jean-Baptiste et le Christ].

## Un ascète

Un autre caractère de Jean est son statut d'ascète. Dès l'annonce de sa naissance, l'ange Gabriel mentionne son abstinence de vin dans l'Évangile de Luc :

Et il ne boira ni vin, ni liqueur fermentée (Lc 1, 15)

On a vu que c'est un des traits propres au nazir<sup>104</sup>. Son abstinence de pain et de vin est aussi mentionnée ailleurs :

Car est venu Jean, le Baptiste, ne mangeant pas de pain ni ne buvant de vin... (Lc 7, 33)

Ses disciples maintiendront cette tradition (Lc 5, 33 ; Mc 2, 18 ; Mt 9, 14) ; la particularité des vœux de nazirat est leur caractère soit permanent (comme c'est le cas de Jean), soit temporaire, ce qui peut s'accorder avec une vie sociale.

Jean a vécu au désert, et outre le fait de pratiquer les règles d'un nazir, il a adopté le mode de vie des nomades. Son vêtement était celui des bédouins et sa nourriture, qui bannissait en particulier le pain (pâte levée), celle du désert en période de disette : son costume comme sa nourriture sont décrits de la même façon par les deux évangélistes, Marc et Matthieu ; selon Marc :

Jean était vêtu d'une peau de chameau et il mangeait des sauterelles et du miel sauvage. (Mc 1, 6)

L'évangile de Matthieu le dit plus précisément :

Or lui, Jean, avait son vêtement de poils de chameau et un pagne de peau autour de ses reins ; sa nourriture était de sauterelles et de miel sauvage. (Mt 3, 3-4)

<sup>104</sup> Wheeler, *loc. cit.*, p. 27-28.



Ce costume, pagne et manteau rappelle celui des Arabes nabatéens tel qu'il est décrit par Strabon<sup>105</sup>, et tel qu'on le trouve représenté sur le relief d'un chamelier dans le Sîq à Pétra.



Fig. 9. Relief du chamelier, le Sîq, Pétra (ph. M.-J. Roche).

Cette vie ascétique ne pouvait que fasciner les Arabes nomades, comme ce fut le cas dans les débuts du christianisme, quand des ermites suscitèrent des conversions parmi les tribus arabes<sup>106</sup>.

### La mort de Jean le Baptiste

Selon les évangiles de Marc (6, 21-29) et de Matthieu (14, 6-12), la mort de Jean est décidée par l'épouse du tétrarque, Hérodiade, et

<sup>105</sup> Strabon, *Géographie*, XVI, iv, 26 : « Les Nabatéens ne portent pas de tunique et vont vêtus de simples caleçons et chaussés de babouches, même les rois ; seulement pour les rois, caleçons et babouches sont teints en pourpre. » ; sur les représentations figurées, les Nabatéens portent des pagnes et des sandales.

<sup>106</sup> Maurice Sartre, *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et byzantine*, Latomus 178, Bruxelles, 1982, p. 143.

sa décollation, demandée par Salomé, en fait un martyr pour ses disciples.

La mort de Jean le Baptiste, rapportée par les Évangiles et par Flavius Josèphe, a frappé les imaginations<sup>107</sup>. Il s'oppose à Hérode Antipas, un roi impie pour les Juifs pieux et à son épouse Hérodiade ; en cela il rappelle Élie qui s'opposa à Athalie. Jean le Baptiste est emprisonné à Machéronte, le château fortifié d'Hérode, sur la rive orientale de la mer Morte, à la limite du territoire nabatéen. Vers 29 de notre ère, il est décapité sur ordre d'Hérode<sup>108</sup>.

### Jean le Baptiste dans les sources arabes

On trouve aussi le nom de Jean cité dans le Coran, où il est ainsi qualifié dans son rôle de prophète (Sour. III, La famille de 'Imran, verset 39) :

... wa sayyidan wa ḥaṣūran wa nabiyyan mina-ṣ-ṣāliḥīn  
... un chef, un chaste, un prophète parmi les Justes.

Le Coran rassemble ainsi, dans sa concision, les trois caractéristiques essentielles de Jean au regard des populations arabes, moins concernées par le baptême que donne Jean ou par son martyre que leurs voisins juifs, mais avec une nuance : le Coran utilise le terme *ḥaṣūrān*, qui est traduit par « chaste »<sup>109</sup>. À cette nuance près, ce sont précisément les trois critères retenus par le Coran qui caractérisent aussi le dieu arabe Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm dans les inscriptions safaitiques : il mène le peuple, il est abstinent et il est en

<sup>107</sup> Flavius Josèphe, *Antiquités judaïques*, XVIII, 116-119 ; la proximité avec la Nabatène est évidente, d'après le récit de la fuite de la fille d'Arétas IV, de Machéronte à Pétra.

<sup>108</sup> Flavius Josèphe, *Antiquités judaïques*, XVIII. 5. 2.

<sup>109</sup> Hans Wehr, *op. cit.*, p. 212 ; le terme contient la notion de limitation et de restriction, et peut donc se traduire, dans le contexte présent, par « chaste, abstinent, continent » ; la connotation sexuelle est l'interprétation que l'on trouve dans les commentaires des auteurs musulmans, alors que les évangiles ne parlent que de vie ascétique.

rapport avec la divinité ; il y a donc un parallèle entre le prophète et la divinité tutélaire.

Cependant, la notion d'ascétisme a été différemment interprétée en Islam ; dans sa *Chronique*, Al-Tabari mentionne ainsi Jean quand il parle de l'annonce de sa naissance à Zacharie<sup>110</sup> :

« Il confirmera le Verbe de Dieu. Il sera un seigneur, chaste, et un prophète du nombre des justes. »

Il interprète donc le terme *ḥaṣūran* dans le sens restreint d'une abstinence sexuelle, « chaste », or l'Évangile de Luc ne parle que de l'abstinence de toute boisson enivrante, et l'on a vu que d'autres mentions des Évangiles signalent que Jean et ses disciples jeûnaient<sup>111</sup> ; l'abstinence sexuelle semblant aller de soi pour un ascète, elle n'est pas mentionnée dans les sources chrétiennes.

### Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm, Lycurgue et Jean Baptiste

L'abstinence du vin caractérise aussi le dieu Lycurgue des inscriptions grecques du Ḥawrān, qui mentionnent le dieu à plusieurs reprises, sur des autels accompagnés parfois de reliefs figurés<sup>112</sup> : une inscription au Musée de Suayda mentionne le dieu Lycurgue<sup>113</sup>, et des dédicaces grecques sont consacrées à Lycurgue dans cette région ; l'une à Ḥibrān date de 156 de notre ère<sup>114</sup> et d'autres ont été trouvées ailleurs dans le Ḥawrān<sup>115</sup>.

C'est Charles Clermont-Ganneau qui a proposé le rapprochement entre le dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm et Lycurgue, qui tous deux ne

<sup>110</sup> Al-Tabari, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

<sup>111</sup> Mc 2, 18 : « Pourquoi les disciples de Jean et les disciples des Pharisiens jeûnent-ils ? » ; la même question est posée à Jésus en Mt 9, 14 et en Lc 5, 33.

<sup>112</sup> Sourdel, *op. cit.*, p. 81-83.

<sup>113</sup> Maurice Dunand, *Le musée de Soueïda. Inscriptions et monuments figurés. Mission archéologique du Jebel Druze*, BAH XX, Geuthner, Paris, 1954, n° 16, p. 174 : Lycurgue.

<sup>114</sup> Healey, *op. cit.*, (2001), p. 143-147

<sup>115</sup> Sourdel, *op. cit.*, p. 83-85.

boivent pas de vin<sup>116</sup>. Le mythe de Lycurgue est raconté par Nonnos de Panopolis au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>117</sup> ; il présente Arès comme le père de Lycurgue, ennemi de Dionysos, et situe le dénouement du combat en Arabie ; Lycurgue détruit les pieds de vigne du dieu avec son attribut, la hache, mais meurt écartelé. L'hypothèse d'un rapprochement entre les deux figures n'a pas toujours été acceptée : Dominique Sourdel qualifie ainsi la théorie de son illustre prédécesseur « plus brillante que solide »<sup>118</sup>. Cependant, le culte de Lycurgue peut s'adresser à des soldats d'origine arabe, des Safaïtiques, qui s'abstiennent du vin, un symbole de la vie urbaine.

Les rapprochements que fait Clermont-Ganneau entre les deux divinités ne peuvent laisser indifférent. Le contexte culturel de l'époque romaine, en l'occurrence le II<sup>e</sup> siècle, favorise les synthèses entre les apports hellénistico-romains et les traditions sémitiques. De plus, le rôle des soldats et des vétérans d'origine arabe est important dans le Ḥawrān, d'où sont issus de nombreux soldats des tribus safaïtiques ; leurs ancêtres se sont établis dans ces régions fertiles à l'époque nabatéenne, et ce sont des Safaïtiques majoritairement qui composaient l'armée nabatéenne.

Les soldats à l'époque romaine sont en général adeptes d'un culte particulier, qu'ils célèbrent dans des thiasés. On a noté que Shay<sup>ʿ</sup> al-Qawm était vénéré par des soldats originaires de l'ancienne Nabatène, mais leur onomastique est safaïtique, et Lycurgue était aussi vénéré par des soldats dans le Ḥawrān, peuplé en majorité de Safaïtiques ; le caractère particulier du dieu Lycurgue pouvait trouver une résonnance chez des soldats habitués à une vie rude.

Ce qui caractérise Lycurgue, c'est d'une part son opposition au dieu Dionysos, et d'autre part sa mort violente, car il est écartelé. Cette mort violente pourrait trouver un écho dans celle de Jean, décapité à Machéronite ; les deux figures du prophète et du dieu arabe peuvent se retrouver dans cette figure divine, vénérée par des soldats à l'époque romaine.

<sup>116</sup> Clermont-Ganneau, *op. cit.*, p. 382-402.

<sup>117</sup> *Dionysiaques*, XX, 205 *sqq.*

<sup>118</sup> Sourdel, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

## Conclusion

Ces cultes reflètent l'ambiance de syncrétisme qui avait cours à la fin de l'époque romaine, et aussi le rôle des soldats pour la diffusion de nouveaux cultes. On a laissé de côté le culte de Jean le Baptiste par les Mandéens, qui ouvre un nouveau chapitre dans l'histoire du judéo-christianisme, mais cet aspect, de même que l'existence de groupes judéo-chrétiens attachés à la figure prophétique de Jean, démontre, s'il était nécessaire, la persistance de l'aura de la figure du fils de Zacharie, dans différents cultes, au delà du Jourdain<sup>119</sup>.

La prédication de Jean est très brève, entre 27 et 29 de notre ère, et il est contemporain de la fin du règne d'Arétas IV. Les Nabatéens sont indirectement responsables de sa mort, selon Flavius Josèphe : ce serait en réponse à la répudiation de sa fille, Sha'udat, par le tétrarque Hérode Antipas, qui voulait épouser sa belle-sœur Hérodiade, que le roi Arétas IV a lancé une attaque contre le souverain judéen, qui a été battu<sup>120</sup>. Cette défaite a été interprétée par les Juifs de Judée comme une punition infligée au roi hérodien, coupable d'avoir fait exécuter le prophète Jean qui fulminait contre le remariage du roi, contraire aux règles du judaïsme. Ce n'est donc qu'après sa mort qu'un culte a pu s'établir, or les datations des inscriptions mentionnant le dieu Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm sont postérieures au premier quart du I<sup>er</sup> siècle de notre ère ; pour les graffites nabatéens, la datation n'est pas possible. Pour les inscriptions safaitiques, les allusions historiques s'accordent avec les II<sup>e</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> siècles.

C'est aussi en Transjordanie que Jean a été emprisonné, soit à cause de la proximité de son lieu de prédication avec la forteresse hérodiennne, soit parce que celle-ci était à l'écart de la Judée, où le prophète était très populaire<sup>121</sup>. Les fonctions du dieu arabe Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm sont donc très proches de celles de la figure du prophète

<sup>119</sup> Voir en particulier Pierre Maraval et Simon C. Mimouni, *Le christianisme : des origines à Constantin*, Paris, PUF, 2008.

<sup>120</sup> Sur cet épisode, cf. Roche, *loc. cit.* (2013).

<sup>121</sup> L'anthroponyme yhyy, est attesté par 5 exemples en safaitique, voir Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 662 ; Yahyâ est le nom en arabe du prophète Jean Baptiste dans le Coran et dans les sources musulmanes.

Jean le Baptiste, tel qu'il est présenté d'une part lors de l'annonciation faite à son père Zacharie dans l'évangile de Luc, et d'autre part par les informations recueillies par les évangiles de Luc, Marc et Matthieu ; elles enrichissent la figure du prophète, et l'accent est alors mis sur son rôle de « Baptiste », mais cette caractéristique est étrangère à la figure du dieu arabe.

C'est le caractère ascétique du prophète, mais aussi son rôle de guide protecteur et sa bienveillance envers les foules qui l'écoutent, que reflètent d'une part son nom, d'autre part sa prédication, qui présentent des rapprochements certains avec la figure du dieu arabe Shay<sup>c</sup> al-Qawm. Son rôle comme Baptiste, du moins dans l'état actuel de nos connaissances, n'apparaît pas, cet élément semble étranger au monde nomade, plus réceptif au message d'un pasteur et d'un ascète.

# A Middle Sabaean Dedicatory Inscription from the Warsaw National Museum

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*Résumé.* Cet article présente une inscription dédicatoire sudarabique sabéenne inédite datant des environs du troisième siècle après J.-C.

## 1. Introduction and Description of the Object

The National Museum in Warsaw (Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie), Islamic Art Collection (Kolekcja Sztuki Islamu) is in possession of a fragmentary Middle Sabaean dedicatory inscription under the inventory number SKAZsz 314. The exact provenance of the inscription is unclear. All that is known is that this piece was brought to the Museum by the Conservation Office in Olsztyn (a city in the North of Poland, previously Allstein in East Prussia) in 1950.<sup>1</sup> Objects transferred to the National Museum just after the war from the so-called “Recovered Territories”, which had been German before the Second World War, were often lacking documentation of their previous history.

The fragment is the upper portion of a limestone plate. The measurements are 38,5 × 30,8 × 2,8 cm. The first line of the fragment coincides with the first line of the text, as can be seen from the fairly straight edge of the stone and from the content (see below). The left side of the fragment coincides with the left side of

\* I am grateful to the authorities of the Warsaw National Museum for the permission to publish this text, and especially to Dr. Magdalena Pinker (Islamic Art Collection) for her cooperation.

<sup>1</sup> The carbon copy of the receipt in the museum archive is dated to 17th of April 1950 and signed by Kazimierz Michałowski, then deputy director of the museum. The original inventory number, until 1990, was 199465.

the text, although some letters are missing. The right side is complete only at lines 3 and 4. This becomes clear from the content of the text (see below) and is corroborated by the fact that the first letters of lines 3 and 4 are perfectly aligned. How much text is missing at the lower part of the inscription is unclear. The fragment ends at the narration of the reason for the dedication, before the closing invocations. This part of the formulary can be either short or rather long in individual cases. So it cannot be determined how much text is missing here.

## 2. Text

- 1) ... ṛd<sup>1</sup> / ṣ<sub>2</sub>w<sup>c</sup> / w<sup>3</sup>hyh<sup>r</sup>w<sup>1</sup> [/].
- 2) .. m / wrṭds<sub>2</sub>ms<sub>1</sub>m / b[ny /]
- 3) kwrmr / ṛdm / mlkn / h[q]
- 4) nyws<sub>2</sub>ymhmw / wdm / d<sup>2</sup>ṣ.
- 5) . ṛ / ṣ<sup>1</sup>lmn / ḥmdm / bḡt
- 6) [wz<sup>3</sup> / f]rqn / grb / ḥbdhw / ṛ
- 7) ..... nṣ<sup>c</sup>t / ḥd / ṣm
- 8) ..... [/] nhl / ..

## 3. Commentary

The language of the text is unmistakably Sabaic. The ductus of the script can be classified as C3, i.e. late Middle Sabaean. This means that the inscription was written around the 3rd ct. C.E.<sup>2</sup> The script shows some peculiarities: the left downward stroke of the *l* has the form of a triangle. The *l* in lines 3, 5 and 8 is indistinguishable from the *g* in line 6. The word dividers show a serif on the top end. The script is rather irregular and the text shows a mistake (see commentary to line 4). These features hint to a private character of this text. Although the inscription is damaged rather bad-

<sup>2</sup> Peter Stein, "Palaeography of the Ancient South Arabian Script, new evidence for an absolute chronology", *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 24, 2013, p. 186-195.



ly, some reconstruction can be done on the basis of the strictly standardized formulary of the Middle Sabaean dedicatory inscriptions.

Line 1. At the beginning of the line, approximately three letters are missing. The incomplete but unambiguous *d* is the last letter of the personal name of the donor. A possible restoration of the name could be  $\text{'s}_1\text{'d}$  which is attested several times as a first name of male individuals in Central Middle Sabaean texts.<sup>3</sup> But this is conjectural, of course.  $\text{'s}_2\text{w'}$  is an extremely frequent name in the second position of compound names in Middle and Late Sabaean times. The Pisa corpus offers 53 occurrences of this by-name.<sup>4</sup> At the end of the line, the word divider and at least one letter are missing.

Line 2. At the beginning of the line, about two letters are missing. The *m* at the beginning of the line is the end of the name of the donor's first brother. It cannot be restored.  $\text{rt}_1\text{ds}_2\text{ms}_1\text{m}$ , the name of the second brother of the donor, is attested twice as a personal name, once in a Middle Sabaean text (Ja 591/1) and once as an incomplete graffiti (RES 2733M/1). The first element of the name,  $\text{rt}_1\text{d}$ , is frequent in Ancient South Arabian and Ancient North Arabian personal names. It signifies either a nominal element in the construct state 'entrusted (to the protection of a deity)', or a verbal predicate in the suffix conjugation 'has protected'.<sup>5</sup> The theophoric element of this name,  $\text{s}_2\text{ms}_1\text{m}$ , refers to the sun-god. The *b* at the end of the line is most probably to be restored as *bny* 'sons of X'.

Line 3. *kwmrm* is—judging from its position, and the fact that it is not in line with the usual patterns employed for male personal names—the name of the clan or the tribe of the donors. It is not yet attested.  $\text{'dm mlkn}$  'clients (or vassals) of the king' is a frequent designation. At the end of the line, after *h*, one letter is missing.

<sup>3</sup> 18 hits in the Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions (<http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it>, 4.4.2017).

<sup>4</sup> Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions (<http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it>, 23.3.2017).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Hani Hayajneh, *Die Personennamen in den qatabānischen Inschriften: Lexikalische und grammatische Analyse im Kontext der semitischen Anthroponomastik*, Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik 10, Hildesheim, Olms, 1998, p. 148.

Line 4. The last visible letter of line 3 and the beginning of line 4 can be completed as *hqnyw* ‘they have dedicated’, the central verb of the formulary that is obligatory after the name and epithets of the donor(s). The missing word divider between *h[q]nyw* and *s<sub>2</sub>ymhmw* is a mistake. *s<sub>2</sub>ym* is a special term for ‘patron deity’. The god *wdm*, one of the most frequently mentioned deities in Ancient South Arabia, is a lunar deity and his name can be interpreted as ‘love’ or ‘friendship’.<sup>6</sup> The epithet *d’š...* signifies the local manifestation of *wdm* (‘of ’š...’) according to the pattern exemplified by manifestations like *wdm d-ms<sub>1</sub>m’m* ‘Waddum of Mas<sub>1</sub>ma-‘um’ (Schm/Samsara 1/2-3). The epithet *d’š...* is unattested.<sup>7</sup> Judging from the position within the text, *wdm d’š[...]* is the deity that receives the dedication. At the end of the line, at least one letter is missing.

Line 5. At the beginning of the line, before the damaged word divider, at least one letter is missing. *šlmn* ‘statue’, in the *status determinatus*, is the object dedicated to the deity. The dedication of statues to deities is a wide-spread religious praxis in Middle Sabaean times. *hmdm* (probably in the adverbial accusative) is ‘in gratitude of’. *b-dt* introduces the clause where the cause of the dedication is specified.

Line 6. At the beginning of the line, approximately five letters are missing. The form *...]rqn* can be completed as an infinitive of the verb *frq* (O<sub>2</sub>-stem) ‘to protect’.<sup>8</sup> Before *frq* the auxiliary verb *wz*

<sup>6</sup> Maria Höfner, “Südarabien (Saba’, Qatabān u.a.)”, in *Götter und Mythen im Vorderen Orient*, ed. Hans Wilhelm Haussig, *Wörterbuch der Mythologie* 1, Stuttgart: Klett, 1965, p. 549-550.

<sup>7</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Anne Multhoff for checking the database of *Sabäisches Wörterbuch* (Jena).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the following passages: *w-l-qbl d-frq ‘bd-hw rbbm b-tqdm qdm b-m ‘rbn* ‘and because (of the fact) that he protected his servant Rabibum in the battle he fought with the Arabs’ CIH 79/8 ff.; *w-l-wz’ ’lmqh thwn b’l ‘wm h’n n w-mt’n w-frqn grybt ‘dm-hw ‘b’mr w-bny-hw* ‘and that ’Almaqah Tahwān, the Lord of (the Temple) ’Awām, continue to help and deliver and protect the persons of his servants ’Ab’amar and his sons’ Ja 567/15 ff.; *w-l-hryn-hmw w-mt’n-hmw w-frqn-hmw bn kl b’s<sub>1</sub>tm w-nkytm w-b’tm ...* ‘and that he may deliver and save and protect them from all evil and damage and injustice and...’ Ja 567/26 ff.; *w-mt’ w-frqn t’lb ‘bd-hw ‘mkrb* ‘and Ta’lab has delivered and protected his servant ‘Ammkarib’ FB-al-‘Adān 1/5f.

‘to continue with’ is to be expected. *ḥmdm b-dt* ‘in gratitude of requires a predicate in the perfect tense.’<sup>9</sup> The expression *grb ʿbd-hw* N.N. ‘the person of his servant (i.e. the servant of the deity) N.N.’ is very common in Sabaean dedicatory inscriptions.<sup>10</sup> After *ʿbd-hw* the name of the person referred to is to be expected. Only one letter, ʾ, is visible, because the beginning of the next line is damaged, but this coincides with the assumption that the first name of the donor is ʾs<sub>1</sub>ʿd (see above).

Line 7. At the beginning of the line five or six letters are missing. The form *ḥnṣʿt* defies interpretation. ʾḥd is the numeral ‘one’.

Line 8. At the beginning of the line, approximately nine letters are missing. *nḥl* in Sabaic means ‘palm grove’, including installations like an enclosure or irrigation systems, not individual palm trees, as in other Semitic languages.<sup>11</sup> At the end of the line, approximately two letters are missing.

#### 4. Translation

A tentative translation of the extant part of the text, with conjectural vowels, runs as follows:

[ʾAs<sub>1</sub>ʿa]d ʾAs<sub>2</sub>waʿ and his brothers N.N. and RaṭadS<sub>2</sub>ams<sub>1</sub>um, sons of (the clan of) Kawmarum, the servants of the king, have dedicated to their patron deity Waddum of ʾAṣ(...) the statue in gratitude be-

<sup>9</sup> A nice parallel to our passage is: *w-ḥmdm b-dt wzʾ ʾlmqh [ḥmr ʿbd-h][w fr]ʿm s<sub>1</sub>bʾ w-mṭw ʿdy ʾrd ḥḏrmwt ṭty s<sub>1</sub>bʾtn* ‘and in praise that ʾAlmaqah has continued to grant his servant Fāriʿum to set forth on two campaigns and hurry to the land of Ḥaḏramawt’ Ir 13/34f.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the following passages: *w-l-wzʾ ʾlmqh mtʿn grb ʿbd-hw ʿbdʾbhw bn bʾs<sub>1</sub>tm w-nkytm* ‘and that ʾAlmaqah may continue to deliver the person of his servant ʿAbdʾabhū from evil and damage’ Ja 2116/8f.; *grb ʾmt-hw ʾbḥlk* ‘the person of his maid-servant ʾAbḥalak’ Ja 751/11; *grybt ʿbdy-hw yrm w-nṣ<sub>2</sub>ʿkrb* ‘the persons of his servants Yarīm and Nas<sub>2</sub>aʾkarib’ Ja 716/11. Other cases are: Ja 567/16; Ja 613/13; Ja 620/5; Ja 740/9; etc.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Sima, *Tiere, Pflanzen, Steine und Metalle in den altsüdarabischen Inschriften: Eine lexikalische und realienkundliche Untersuchung*, Veröffentlichungen der orientalischen Kommission 46, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2000, p. 217-239.

cause he continued to protect the person of his servant ʿ[Asīʿad] (...) one (...) palm plantation (...).



*Middle Sabaeen Inscription from the Warsaw National Museum  
(SKAZsz 314)*

## **“Linguistica, Epigraphica et Philologica”. The Scientific Work of Giovanni Garbini**

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***Résumé.** En marge du Colloque « Giovanni Garbini, L'Évangile araméen de Matthieu. Mémorial d'un maître dans son dernier ouvrage », tenue à l'Université Catholique du Sacré-Cœur, au siège de Brescia, trois mois après sa mort, nous rappelons ici les grandes lignes de la recherche de l'éminent orientaliste (1931-2017), qui émergent aussi de l'œuvre posthume.*

The scientific work of Giovanni Garbini, along with the man himself, one of the most prominent Italian names in Oriental Studies, were recalled three months after his death at the Catholic University of Brescia with a conference sponsored by the “Francesco Vattioni” Archive of Ancient Near East Bibliographic and Documentary Sources. From studies of Semitic linguistics and epigraphy in the Near-Eastern civilizations, Garbini had gradually moved on to Semitic religions, before continuing with the history and philology of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament writings.

Emeritus of Semitic Philology at “La Sapienza” University of Rome and member of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Garbini began to work as a university professor at the Istituto Universitario Orientale of Naples, before transferring to the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa. Student of Sabatino Moscati at “La Sapienza”, he studied Semitic languages from a comparative historical perspective and deepened his understanding of the different aspects of the Amorite, Phoenician, Jewish and pre-Islamic Arab cultures through important archaeological missions in Israel, Malta, Yemen and Ethiopia. Indeed, he regarded the historical development of the Semitic languages as the cultural and historic backdrop for the various peoples he studied. His interest in epig-

raphy was a natural consequence of his studies, given that, in this area, inscriptions are the only direct source.

On these themes, Garbini published numerous essays and more than fifty monographs (*L'opera di Giovanni Garbini. Bibliografia degli scritti 1956-2006*, Brescia, Paideia, 2007); many of them have been revised, translated and distributed abroad. His scientific studies, which resulted in him dealing with biblical texts, led him to attempt a historical reconstruction of ancient Israel and to stand out thanks to the methodology he used for the study, drawing on various biblical and extra-biblical proofs.

## **1. Semitic languages, civilisations and religions**

The commemoration of Garbini was led by Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti, Emeritus of Semitic Philology at the University of Turin, and one of the first students of Garbini. He had already given a speech in May 2016 at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, with Thomas L. Thompson, to present the Festschrift *Finding Myth and History in the Bible*, dedicated to the professor by the last generation of his students.

Pennacchietti now recalled the scientific figure through a review of major publications that marked the progress of his research. He met Garbini in 1959 at “La Sapienza”, where the most prestigious Italian names in Oriental studies of the period came together, including Giorgio Levi della Vida, Carlo Alfonso Nallino, Giuseppe Furlani, and Francesco Gabrieli. Garbini was the first student of Sabatino Moscati who, in 1957, had written the celebrated essay *Chi furono i Semiti*, allowing Italian culture to discover this civilization, before turning to the study of the Phoenicians in 1959.

The scientific debut of Garbini took the shape of an important volume, *L'Aramaico antico* (1956), which marked the birth of his dual passion for linguistics and epigraphy. He devoted himself with enthusiasm to the study of inscriptions and published two important works: *Storia e problemi dell'epigrafia semitica* (1979) and *Introduzione all'epigrafia semitica* (2006), followed later by the more

challenging *Avvio alla lettura delle iscrizioni "pseudo-geroglifiche" di Biblo* (2009). His contribution has been fundamental in the field of linguistics, where, with *Il Semitico di nordovest* (1960) he lay the path for a new vision, elaborated in his later pursuits, especially in *Le Lingue semitiche: studi di storia linguistica* (1972, 2nd ed. in 1984). Pennacchietti stressed that Garbini's ability to read each event from a historical perspective led him to the conclusion that these languages developed with the emergence of the Amorites—the predecessors of the Aramaeans—which in fact altered the languages of the Canaanite area, and above all of what later became Aramaic, and also influenced North Arabian and later a part of South Arabian. According to Garbini, Semitic languages originated in Syria; then they partially split, moving into Mesopotamia, gradually taking the place of Sumerian; thus the so-called Eastern Semitic language was formed, while in the Western world Canaanite remained along the coast, gradually giving way to Amorite and Aramaic.

Garbini continued to deal with linguistics in *Introduzione alle lingue semitiche* (1994) and *Il semitico nordoccidentale* (1988), through the study of inscriptions. His contribution to the field of Yemeni epigraphy was very important and required great expertise due to the presence of less pronounced lexical proximities in Southern Semitic than in Northwest Semitic.

At the same time he became interested in ancient Israel's ideological heritage, developing a new methodology for the study of history and philology, whose manifesto he had begun sketching out in the work *Storia e ideologia nell'Israele antico* (1986). But a substantial change of perspective was also introduced with his *Cantico dei Cantici* (1992). As aware as Moscati of the unified historical development of the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean, Garbini found in the *Song of Songs* the traces of the influence of Alexandrian erotic poetry, and continued to demonstrate all possible relationships between the classical world and the Orient, as well as the resulting changes, because he understood that over time the socio-cultural, linguistic and religious situation necessarily changed, and that a text of that kind could be situated historically only within a later period. In 1998 he published *Note di lessicografia ebraica*, beginning to propose a new vision of the his-

tory of ancient Israel. On the same theme was his *Il ritorno dall'esilio babilonese* (2001) and *Mito e storia nella Bibbia* (2003), followed by *Scrivere la storia di Israele* (2008) and *Letteratura e politica nell'Israele antico* (2010). Like Moscati, Garbini often focused on the Phoenician civilisation, making it one of the most original parts of his work: he viewed their world as culturally superior to the Hebrew world, and the Hebrew language as a dialect of Phoenician. Through this study he then reaches the Philistines, who he identifies with the *Peleset*, one of the Sea Peoples who attacked Egypt under Ramesses III and then settled in Canaan between the 11th and the middle of the 9th century BC, giving their name to the region. Pennacchietti adds that Garbini regarded the Philistines as rulers of most of the Mediterranean from the 13th to 10th century BC, and as he identified in the iconographic production of this civilisation some archaeological remains found on the banks of the Po, in Sardinia and in Sicily. On this subject Garbini published *I filistei: gli antagonisti di Israele* (2012), preceded by *I Fenici. Storia e religione* (1980), and by *La religione dei fenici in Occidente* (1994). His research, strictly from a historical perspective, proceeded with a continuous contextualization, as he was convinced that to understand the older literature of the Bible a comparison between the civilisations and religions surrounding it was necessary, as evidenced in *Dio della terra, dio del cielo* (2011) and *Il poema di Baal di Ilumilku* (2014).

In his latest works Garbini began to discuss the NT with the *Vita e mito di Gesù* (2015) and *Il vangelo aramaico di Matteo* (2017). He assumed that no text of a normative nature, transmitted through a long oral tradition, can remain free from intentional tampering (integrations, deletions, omissions), justified by the gradual changing of religious beliefs, cultural experiences and socio-political conditions. As for the Bible, Pennacchietti points out that the various aspects of social life and religious practice, accepted as normal in earlier times, could not be excluded as they are unpopular for succeeding generations and culturally higher levels, the custodians of tradition. They were the social classes that were most exposed to the influence of the surrounding peoples such as the Phoenicians, then the Assyrians and the Babylo-



nians, and later the Persians and the peoples of the Greek civilisation.

## 2. History and philology of the Hebrew Bible

Garbini's long scientific career, inaugurated in 1956 with the famous volume *L'Aramaico antico*, ended with *Il vangelo aramaico di Matteo e altri saggi* (Turin, Paideia, 2017), published posthumously. This last work, of which he had managed to review the drafts before it was printed, is therefore a sort of memorial, since it provides in fact the inspiration for remembering his multifaceted career and his main lines of research, highlighting the singular methodology that made Garbini a true leader for entire generations of Semitists.

The book, presented by the writer of this paper, who also had the honour of organising the Colloquium *in memoriam*, is a collection of recent essays, some previously unpublished, that range from the history and culture of ancient Israel to the birth of Christianity. In the analysis, the essays on the Hebrew Bible have been given priority as they best represent Garbini's innovative research, inherent in the philological-linguistic study from a historical and religious perspective.

His most original contribution to textual criticism is the re-evaluation of the contribution of the MT, albeit only as a starting point for the study. In fact, if it is true that in the search for the *Ur-text* biblical philology currently tends to highlight the *Vorlage* of LXX, reaching it through *Old Greek*, which does not exist but must be reconstructed in each case, since the Greek we know is a result of a traditional ecclesiastical reworking, Garbini wanted to bring our attention back to the MT. He was convinced that, even though it is the product of ideological interpretations of the Judaic revision, to the careful eye it often reveals the criteria that the rabbis would have used to alter the text for religious purposes. Garbini, with his "philological dig" has been able to reconstruct many original texts, and so track down historical information that the Masoretes "masked".

For example, in the contribution that opens the volume with a striking and provocative title, *Chi ha creato Adamo?*, he concludes that it is possible to identify already in the story of Gen 1–2 traces of the trinitarian statement in God, since Yhwh was assisted in the creation (Prov 8:22–23) by Wisdom (*ḥokmâ*), of female gender, created in turn by the Spirit (*rûaḥ*), also female, who in the beginning “was hovering over the waters” (Gen 1:2). So a Triune God, both male and female, created Adam, who was created both male and female (Gen 1:27) since he was created by God “in his own ‘figure’ (*ṣelem*) and likeness” (Gen 1:26). The Judaic revision had altered the text, as they were unable to tolerate this affirmation, even though some trace of it was left here and there: for example, the third person male singular pronoun (*hûʾ*), often used with the feminine value (*hîʾ*) and therefore in the *Qere Perpetuum* it is sometimes transcribed with the unreadable form (*hwʾ*), consisting of the male consonants and the female *hireq* point; and in the same way the term *naʿar*, “boy”, is sometimes used to express the feminine, “girl”, despite there being a regularly attested female noun *naʿârâ*, “girl”.

According to Garbini, therefore, the resemblance between God and his creature consisted of the male and female being, and it was produced by the divine “figure”: the God who created Adam was a triune “figure”, Yhwh, Spirit, Wisdom, who would one day present himself to Abraham to foretell Isaac’s birth in Gen 18. The existence of a plurality in God is evidenced by the use of the plural verb by the Creator in Genesis 1:26–27 (“Let us make”), which refers, according to Garbini, “those who were near” God, who “worked with him”. He then shows that the word *ṣelem* was chosen to “hide the true nature of what made mankind like God”, a real similarity that was not, however, to be declared explicitly.

The essays that make up this collection attest to the variety of Garbini’s interests. They deal above all with historical books, which he examines from a minimalist point of view, thus proposing a lower dating of the texts (mostly from the Persian era, but also from the Greek and Roman period), because of their unreliable statements on a historical level. One of the most significant is *La conquista di Gerusalemme*, from the biblical text attributed to David. For Garbini it never took place “because Jerusalem had al-

ready belonged to the Benjamin tribe for several generations before Saul"; or that on *Gionata e i giorni di Gabaa* (the corruption of *Gilbōa*), which initially investigates the true nature of the bond between Jonathan and David, reinterpreted based on the friendships of the heroes of the classical age, before converging on the study of the David figure, designed after the exile from a doubling of Saul, as his own name reveals, *dāwid*, "beloved", epithet reserved for political figures of David's circle; or, finally, the essay on the *Serpente di Mosè*, about the poor consistency of the historical figure of Moses, who was introduced into the text in order to make him the founder of Yahwism, with resumption of a Moses who was a blacksmith and prophet and saved his people from a plague with his snake.

### 3. The gospel in Aramaic

The last contribution, illustrated by Antonio Zani, addresses the problem of the existence of an Aramaic gospel of Matthew, according to Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (Frigia), who lived in the beginning of 2nd century AD. The hypothesis of Garbini begins with a fragment of Papias' writing of which we can read only a few lines, reported by Eusebius of Caesarea, which cites: "Matthew wrote the speeches of Jesus in Hebrew and everyone translated them as well as they could." Today no one discusses the authenticity of this news, which offers an authoritative witness to the existence of a gospel that Garbini demonstrates as being written "in Aramaic", the language spoken in Judea at the time of Jesus. This is the gospel that is deemed as the source and example for all the gospels.

For Garbini, from this Aramaic gospel, the gospel texts in Greek *koiné* were born—that is, they translated them into Greek from this Aramaic gospel "as well as they could"; from these gospels therefore came the ones we know today, first of all that of Mark. *Il vangelo aramaico di Matteo* is the punctual confirmation that in the Greek text of Matthew there are very obvious and recurring Aramaisms, attestations of an undoubtedly Semitic, and probably Aramaic, *Vorlage* that emerge from the *koiné*: it was used

for the editing of the text transmitted to us in Greek, which in terms of syntax, style and lexicon reveals a Semitic logical-conceptual scheme, with linguistic adaptations to the language of the Hellenistic-Jewish community of the Egyptian diaspora, who used a very similar vocabulary to that of the Greek of the documentary papyrus.

Zani states that Enrico Norelli, in *Papia di Hierapolis, Esposizione degli oracoli del Signore* (Milan, Paoline, 2005) had already approached the same fragment of Papias' text, without departing from the assumption of Garbini, which, however, in addition offers his own "philological dig" into the text. The figure of Jesus who, for Garbini, comes from this Aramaic gospel, the first gospel, has little in common with what we know from the gospels we have today, which speak of a merciful father who rejoices when the prodigal son returns, or a shepherd who leaves the flock to go in search of the lost sheep; the Jesus reconstructed by Garbini in the Aramaic gospel is in fact more in keeping with Jewish thought and is more of a messianic figure. The author of this alleged Aramaic gospel believed that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, but he had the traits of a judge who is to announce the judgment of the Father, rather than being the merciful Father and the Good Shepherd. It is then a later textual tradition that integrates this vision—that cannot be expunged from the gospels—with a richer perspective.

#### 4. The gift of his library

The ceremony was finally a happy occasion for the Pro-Rector, Mario Taccolini, to pay grateful tribute to the memory of Giovanni Garbini for the donation of valuable books from his personal library to the Catholic University of Brescia. His books, ranging from comparative Semitic linguistics to epigraphy, history, civilization and ancient Semitic religions up to Biblical philology, will enrich the Archives dedicated to his friend Francesco Vattioni, a

Semitical philologist from Brescia, with whom Garbini shared his studies and research interests.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. Toloni, “‘Biblica et Semitica’: L’œuvre scientifique de Francesco Vattioni”, *Semitica* 58 (2016) 297-305.